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BALZAC.

VOL. III.

MADAME FIRMIANI.

A DOUBLE FAMILY.

LONDON:
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THE

CAT AND BATTLEDORE,

And Other Tales.

By HONORÉ DE BALZAC.

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH BY

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

MADAME FIRMIANI. A DOUBLE FAMILY.

London:

SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, & RIVINGTON,

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1879.

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MADAME FIRMIANI.

TO MY DEAR ALEXANDRE DE BERNY,
HIS OLD FRIEND
DE BALZAC.

MANY narratives are so rich in situations, or so dramatic through innumerable strokes of chance, that they may be said to carry with them their own accessories, and may without any, even the slightest, loss of effect, be related, with more or less of art, by every tongue; but there are also certain episodes in human life that fall flat, unless told in the language of the heart; there are certain details, anatomical details, so to speak, which reappear in all their delicacy, only under the influence of most skilful infusions of thought. Again, there are portraits which

require a soul, and are nothing without the most subtle features of their mobile physiognomy; lastly, there are things which we can neither say nor do except under the charm of some inexplicable harmonies, resulting from a particular day, or hour, a fortunate conjunction of the heavenly bodies, or certain secret mental predispositions.

Some mysterious revelations of this kind were imperiously demanded ere narrating this simple story; for we desire to engage the interest of some of those naturally melancholy and reflective minds, which feed upon gentle emotions. If the writer, like a surgeon at the bedside of a dying friend, has acquired a kind of respect for the subject he has been handling, why should not the reader share this inexplicable feeling?

Is it difficult to enter into that vague nervous sadness, which spreads its grey tints

around us—a demi-malady, whose gentle pangs are at times not wholly unpleasing? If, perchance, you are thinking of the dear ones you have lost, if you are alone, if it is night-time, or if the day is dying, read on, —if not, you should throw the book away at once. If you have not as yet buried some good aunt, who was infirm or fortuneless, you will not understand these lines. To some, they will seem impregnated with musk; to others, they will appear as colourless, and innocent as a page of Florian. In a word, the reader should have known the rapture of tears, should have felt the mute sorrow of a souvenir that flits lightly by, bearing some cherished shade, cherished but long since lost; he should possess some of those memories which, while they evoke our regret for what the grave has torn from us, awake a smile over the happiness that is no more. Now, let the reader believe that

not for all the riches of England would the author snatch from the realms of romance a single figment to adorn his tale. This is a true story, over which you may expend the treasures of your sensibility, if you have any.

In these days our language has as many idioms as there are varieties of men in the great French family. Accordingly it is really both curious and amusing to listen to the different interpretations or versions of the same fact or event, by each of the species which are included in the monograph of the Parisian; the Parisian being taken in order to generalize the thesis.

Thus, we will suppose that you have asked one of the members of the family of Positives, "Do you know Madame Firmiani?" That man will have translated Madame Firmiani into the following inventory, "A large house situated in the Rue

du Bac, drawing-rooms very well furnished, fine pictures, a round hundred thousand francs a year; a husband formerly receiver-general in the department of Montenotte." Having thus delivered himself, Mr. Positive, a big and burly man, almost always dressed in black, makes a slight grimace of satisfaction, purses up his under-lip so as to cover the upper one, and nods his head, as much as to say, "Very substantial people, and nothing to be said about them." Don't ask him anything further. The Positives explain everything by figures, funded property, or good tangible acres—a phrase of their vocabulary.

Turn now to the right, and repeat your question to this other person, who belongs to the family of Idlers. "Madame Firmiani?" says he, "yes, yes, I know her well, I go to her soirées; her reception-day is Wednesday; it is a very respectable

house." Madame Firmiani, you see, is already metamorphosed into a house. But this house is not a heap of stones architecturally disposed; no, the word house, in the language of the Idlers, is an untranslatable idiom. Here the Idler, a wiry man, with an agreeable smile, a sayer of pretty trifles, who has always more acquired than natural wit, bends close to your ear and says, with a subtle look, "I have never seen Monsieur Firmiani. His social position is that of an estate manager in Italy; but Madame Firmiani is a French woman, and spends her income like a Parisian. She has excellent tea. It is one of those houses, now so rare, where one is amused, and where what they give you is excellent. Moreover, it is very difficult to get an introduction to her; so that the best society is to be found in her drawing-rooms." Then the Idler comments on

the last phrase, by slowly taking a pinch of snuff, which he administers to his nose in little doses. He seems to say to you, "*I* go to the house, but don't reckon upon me to introduce *you* there." For the Idlers, Madame Firmiani keeps a sort of inn, without a sign.

"What on earth do you want to go to Madame Firmiani's for? why, it's as dull as the Court. What is the use of having intellect, if not in order to avoid those *salons* where, in these days of bad poetry, every little ballad is read as soon as it is produced?"

You have put your question to one of your friends who may be classed with the Personals. They would like to keep the universe under lock and key, and let nothing go on in it without their permission. They are miserable over all the happiness of other people, are lenient only to vices,

social downfalls, and weaknesses; they want only protégés. Aristocrats by inclination, they turn republicans from spite, simply for the sake of finding a number of inferiors among their equals.

"Oh! Madame Firmiani, my dear fellow, is one of those adorable women who serve to excuse Dame Nature for having created so many ugly ones. She is enchanting, she is good. I should not care for power, a throne, or millions, except—(*here three words are whispered in your ear*).—Shall I present you?"

This youth is of the genus Lycéen, noted for its great audacity when surrounded by men, and its great timidity when alone with women.

"Madame Firmiani?" cries another, whirling his cane round; "I will tell you what I think about her. She is a woman between thirty and thirty-five, face some-

what passée, fine eyes, flat figure, worn contralto voice, rather overdressed, a touch of rouge, charming manners; in fact, my dear fellow, the wreck of a pretty woman, who nevertheless, is still worth the trouble of a flame."

This opinion comes from the lips of one of the Fop genus who has just lunched, does not weigh his words, and is going out for a ride. At such moments the Fops are merciless.

"She has a gallery of magnificent pictures; go and see it," replies another. "Nothing can be finer."

You have been addressing yourself to the genus Amateur. The individual leaves you and goes to Pérignon's or Tripet's. For him, Madame Firmiani is a collection of painted canvas.

A woman.—"Madame Firmiani? I don't wish you to go to her house." This phrase

is the richest of renderings. "Madame Firmiani! a dangerous woman! a siren! she dresses well, she has good taste; she causes all wives restless nights." The interlocutress belongs to the genus Busybody.

An attaché.—"Madame Firmiani? Is she not from D'Anvers? I saw that woman—very handsome—ten years ago. She was then at Rome." The members of the class Attachés have a mania for phrases à la Talleyrand; their wit is often so fine-drawn that their points are imperceptible; these men resemble those billiard-players who miss the balls with infinite address. They are generally very taciturn; but when they do talk, they only trouble themselves about Spain, Vienna, Italy, or St. Petersburg. With them the names of countries are like springs; press them, and the musical-box will give you all its tunes.

"Does not this Madame Firmiani visit a good deal in the Faubourg St. Germain?"

This is said by a woman who *wants* to belong to the genus Distingué. She gives the "de" to every one, to Monsieur Dupin, senior, and to Monsieur Lafayette; she throws it right and left, she dishonours people with it. She spends her life in troubling herself about "the correct thing;" but to her grave annoyance, she lives in the Marais, and her husband was an attorney, but—an attorney of the Court Royal.

"Madame Firmiani, sir? I don't know her."

This man belongs to the genus Duke. He does not acknowledge women who have not been presented. Excuse him; he got his dukedom from Napoleon.

"Madame Firmiani? Wasn't she formerly a singer at the Italian Opera?" This man belongs to the genus Fool. Individuals of this class must have an answer for everything. Rather than be silent they calumniate.

Two old ladies (wives of former magistrates).—*The first* (wears a cap, has a wrinkled face, a pointed nose, carries a prayer-book, and has a harsh voice). "What is her maiden name—this Madame Firmiani's?"

The second (small red face, resembling a crab-apple, soft voice).—"She is a Cadignan, my dear; niece of the old Prince de Cadignan, and consequently cousin of the Duc de Maufrigneuse."

Madame Firmiani is a Cadignan. Had she neither virtue, nor fortune, nor youth, she would still be a Cadignan. 'Tis like a prejudice—ever rich and ever young.

An Original.—"My dear fellow, I have never seen any clogs in her anteroom; you may go to her house without compromising yourself, and play cards without fear; for if there are rascals there, they are men of quality; therefore there is no quarrelling."

Old man belonging to the genus Observers. —"If you go to Madame Firmiani's, you will find, my dear fellow, a handsome woman, carelessly seated at the corner of the fireplace. She will hardly rise from her armchair; she does not leave it except for women, ambassadors, dukes, people of rank and station; she is very graceful, charms, talks well, and is ready to talk upon every subject. She looks like a woman who can love, but so many men are said to be her admirers, that she cannot have a favourite. If suspicion attached only to two or three of her acquaintances, we should know who is her *cavalier servant;* but the woman is a mystery altogether; she is married, and we have never seen her husband; Monsieur Firmiani is quite a mythical being—he is like the third post-horse, which one always has to pay for, and never sees; the

lady, if we are to believe the professors, is the first contralto in Europe, and has not sung three times since she has lived in Paris; she receives a great number of people, but never goes out."

The Observer speaks like a prophet. One must accept his words, his anecdotes, and his quotations, as truths, under pain of being taken to be a man without education and talent. He will gaily traduce you in twenty *salons*, where he is as indispensable as the first piece on a play-bill, —a piece so often played to empty benches now, though formerly successful. The Observer is forty, never dines at home, and says that women have little to fear from him; he powders his hair, wears a maroon coat, and always has a seat in several boxes at the *Bouffons*. He is sometimes confounded with the Parasites; but he has filled too high functions to be suspected of being a

sponger, and moreover, he owns an estate in a department, the name of which he carefully conceals.

"Madame Firmiani? Why, my dear fellow, she is a former mistress of Murat's."

This man belongs to the class Contradictor. These people supply the errata to every one's memory, rectify every fact, always bet a hundred to one, and are sure of everything. In the course of a single evening, you catch them in flagrant delict of ubiquity; they represent themselves to have been at Paris during the Mallet conspiracy, forgetting that only half an hour before they had just crossed the Beresina. Almost all the Contradictors are chevaliers of the Legion of Honour; speak very loud, have a retreating forehead, and play high.

"Madame Firmiani, a hundred thousand francs a year? Are you mad? In truth

certain people will give you a hundred thousand francs a year, with all the liberality of authors who can portion their heroines for nothing. Why, Madame Firmiani is a coquette, who recently ruined a young man, and stood in the way of his marrying extremely well. If she were not handsome, she would not have a farthing."

As for this one, you recognize *him* no doubt; he belongs to the class Envious, and we will not describe even one of his characteristics. The species is as well known as that of *felis domestica*. What is the explanation of the perpetuity of envy, a vice which brings in—nothing?

In January, 1824, men of the world, men of letters, respectable men, men of every kind you can mention, were spreading so many different opinions about Madame Firmiani, that it would be tedious to note them all here. We only want to show

that a man who wanted to know something about her, without wishing, or being able, to pay her a visit, would have been equally justified in believing her to be wife or widow, stupid or witty, virtuous or immoral, rich or poor, feeling or heartless, beautiful or ugly; in short, there were as many Madame Firmianis as there are classes in society, sects in Catholicism. Fearful thought! We are like so many lithographic plates, of which slander produces an infinite number of copies. These proofs resemble the model so closely, or differ from it by shades of distinction so minute, that barring the calumnies of our friends, and the witticisms of the newspapers, our reputation depends on the balance struck by each person between Truth, which walks and halts and hobbles as it goes, and Falsehood, which flies winged by Parisian wit.

Madame Firmiani, like many women full of nobleness and pride, who make their hearts a sanctuary and despise the world, might have been very much misjudged by Monsieur de Bourbonne, an old land-owner, who had her much in his thoughts, during the winter of this year. It so happened that this landholder belonged to the class, Provincial Planters, men accustomed to account to themselves for everything, and to chaffer with the peasantry. At this trade a man becomes perspicacious in spite of himself, just as a soldier contracts, in the long-run, a sort of routine courage. This inquisitive old man from Touraine, whom the Parisian *idioms* did not quite satisfy, was a highly honourable nobleman, whose only heir was a nephew. It was for this nephew that he was planting the poplars.

This ultra-natural kindness gave rise to

many calumnies, to which the individuals of the various species of the Tourainer, gave very witty turns. But it is useless to report them, for they would pale beside the calumnies of Paris. When a man can see before his eyes every day fine rows of poplars growing more and more beautiful, and think of his heir without displeasure, his love for him increases every time he digs around his trees. Although this phenomenon of feeling is not common, it is sometimes to be met with—in Touraine.

This beloved nephew, whose name was Octave de Camps, was descended from the famous Abbé de Camps, so well known to bibliophiles, or the learned,—a somewhat different class. Now, the inhabitants of the provinces have a bad habit of visiting with decent disapproval those young men who sell their estates. This Gothic prejudice interferes with the stock-

jobbing, which, up till now, the Government encourages from necessity. Without consulting his uncle, Octave had suddenly disposed of an estate, in favour of the *black gang*. The Chateau de Vilaines would have been demolished, but for the offers which the old uncle made to the representatives of the company du Marteau. To increase the indignation of the old testator, a friend of Octave's, a remote relation,—one of those cousins with small fortunes and great ability,—of whom the prudent folks of the same province say, "I should not like to go to law with him," had gone to Monsieur de Bourbonne and told him of his nephew's ruin. "Monsieur Octave de Camps," so ran the story, "after having dissipated his fortune for a certain Madame Firmiani, is reduced to teaching mathematics, until he comes in for the fortune of his uncle, to whom he fears to go

and own his faults." This third cousin, a kind of Charles Moor, was not ashamed to impart this fatal news to the old country gentleman, at the moment when he was digesting before his large fire, a copious provincial dinner. But expectant heirs don't get round an uncle quite so easily as they would wish. This uncle who refused to put faith in the third cousin's story, came, thanks to his obstinacy, triumphantly out of the fit of indigestion caused by his nephew's biography. Certain blows fall upon the heart, others attack the head; the blow struck by the third cousin fell upon the entrails, and produced but little effect, because the old gentleman had an excellent stomach. Like a true disciple of St. Thomas, Monsieur de Bourbonne went to Paris without Octave's knowledge, wishing to obtain information about his nephew's catastrophe. The old nobleman,

who through the Listomères, the Lenoncourts, and the Vandenesses, had relations with the Faubourg St. Germain—heard so much scandal, calumnies, truth, and falsehood about Madame Firmiani, that he resolved to get an introduction to her under the name of Monsieur de Rouxellay, the name of his estate. The prudent old man had taken care to select for his study of Octave's reputed mistress, an evening during which he knew his nephew would be engaged in finishing a piece of well-paid work; for Madame Firmiani still received her so-called lover—a circumstance which no one could explain. As for Octave's ruin, that, unfortunately, was no fable.

Monsieur de Rouxellay was not at all like an uncle on the stage of the Gymnase. As an old musketeer, as a man of fashion, as a man who had himself been a successful lover, he knew how to present himself cour-

teously, remembered the polished manners of by-gone days, could say polite things, and understood almost all the *Charte*. Although he loved the Bourbons with noble simplicity, believed in God as noblemen do believe in Him, and read only the *Quotidienne*, he was not so ridiculous as the Liberals of his department would have liked him to be. He could hold his own with the courtiers, provided they did not mention *Mose in Egitto*, the drama, romanticism, local colouring, or railways. He had stuck to Monsieur de Voltaire, Monsieur le Comte de Buffon, Peyronnet and the Chevalier Gluck, the musician of the Queen's corner.

"Madame," said he to the Marquise de Listomère, who was hanging on his arm as he entered Madame Firmiani's, "if this woman is my nephew's mistress, I pity him. How can she live in the lap of luxury, knowing that he is in a garret? She has no

feelings then? Octave is a madman to have invested the price of the Vilaines estate in the heart of a . . . . ."

Monsieur de Bourbonne belonged to the genus Fossil, and knew only the language of the olden time.

"But if he had lost it at the gaming table?"

"Well, madame, then he would at least have had the pleasure of gambling."

"Do you think that he has had no pleasure then? Now, just look at Madame Firmiani."

The most ravishing souvenirs of the old uncle paled at the sight of the reputed mistress of his nephew. His anger evaporated in a gracious expression, extorted from him by the appearance of Madame Firmiani. By one of those chances which happen only to pretty women, that was a moment when all her beauties were

shining with peculiar brilliance, which was perhaps due to the light of the wax candles, to a toilette of admirable simplicity, and to some indescribable reflection of the elegance in the midst of which she lived. One must have studied the little revolutions which occur during the evening in a Parisian drawing-room, in order to appreciate the almost imperceptible tints which may colour the face of a woman and change it. There is a moment when, satisfied with her dress, conscious of her wit, and happy in the admiration which she receives as queen of a *salon* crowded with men of mark, who smile at her, a Parisian lady feels the full power of her beauty and her grace.

At such a moment she gathers fresh charms from all the looks which are directed to and animate her. She collects the unspoken homage and conveys it in subtle glances to the man she loves. At such a

moment a woman is invested with a kind of supernatural power, and becomes a magician. An unconscious coquette, she involuntarily inspires the love which she secretly feels. Her smiles and looks act like a charm. If this condition, which has its root in the heart, gives grace even to the ugly, with what splendour must it clothe a woman of native elegance, whose figure is full of distinction, whose complexion is pure and fresh, and who, to crown all, is dressed with a taste which artists and even her cruelest rivals cannot gainsay?

Have you been so fortunate as to meet some person whose harmonious voice lends enchantment to her language, who has the same charm of manner, who knows both how to speak and how to be silent, who pays you attention with delicacy, whose words are well chosen, whose language is pure? Her raillery resembles a caress, her criticism

does not wound; she neither discourses nor disputes, but takes pleasure in guiding a discussion, and stops it just at the right time. Her air is affable and smiling; her politeness is never forced; her zeal is never servile. She tones down respect till it is but a gentle shadow; she never wearies you; she leaves you contented with yourself and her. Her grace is stamped upon all that surrounds her. In her apartments everything charms the eye, and you breathe in them, as it were, an atmosphere of home. This woman is natural; in her there is no effort, no display; her sentiments are expressed simply, because they are true. Though frank, she always avoids wounding any one's self-love; she takes men as God has made them, pitying the vicious, pardoning defects and absurdities, understanding every period of life, and taking everything quietly, because she has the tact to foresee every-

thing. At once affectionate and gay, she helps before she consoles. You love her, —this angel,—so much, that should she commit a fault you feel ready to justify it. Have you met such a woman? Then you know Madame Firmiani.

When old Monsieur Bourbonne had sat by this lady's side, and chatted with her for a quarter of an hour, his nephew was acquitted. He clearly saw that, real or apparent, the passion of Octave and Madame Firmiani concealed some mystery.

Recalling the illusions which gild the morning of our youth, and judging of the heart of Madame Firmiani from her beauty, the old gentleman thought that a woman so imbued with a sense of her own dignity as she seemed, was incapable of a bad action. Her black eyes betokened so much internal calm, the lines of her face were so noble, its contours so pure, and the passion which was

imputed to her seemed to sit so lightly on her heart, that the old man said to himself, as he admired all that that adorable face promised to love and virtue, "My nephew must have been guilty of some folly."

Madame Firmiani confessed to five-and-twenty. But the Positives proved, that having been married in 1813 at the age of sixteen, she must in 1825 be at least twenty-eight. Nevertheless, the same persons also asserted that never at any period of her life had she been so capable of inspiring passion, nor so thoroughly the woman as now. She had no children, and had had none; the problematical Firmiani, who was in 1813 a highly respectable quadragenarian, had not, so 'twas said, been able to offer her anything beyond his name and fortune. Madame Firmiani then had just reached the age at which the Parisian woman best understands love, and perhaps during her hours

of idleness, in all innocence, desires it. She had acquired all that the world sells, all that it lends, and all that it gives. The genus Attaché maintained that she was ignorant of nothing; the Contradictors maintained that she had still many things to learn; the Observers discovered that her hands were very white, her foot extremely small, and her movements somewhat too undulating; but the individuals of *every* genus envied or contested the good fortune of Octave, agreeing that she was the most aristocratically beautiful woman in Paris. Still young, rich, a perfect musician, witty, elegant, admitted by virtue of her connexion with the Cadignans, to which family her mother belonged, to the *salon* of the Princesse de Blamont-Chauvry,—the oracle of the noble faubourg,—loved by her rivals the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse (her cousin), the Marquise d'Espard, and Madame Macu-

mer, she gratified all those vanities which nourish love, or excite it. Accordingly, she was admired by too many men not to be the victim of that graceful Parisian scandal, and those charming calumnies, which are murmured so wittily behind the fan, or in the *aside*.

It will now be seen that the observations with which this story begins were necessary, in order to distinguish the real Firmiani from the world's Firmiani. If some women forgave her for her happiness, others did not pardon her for her decorum. Now, there is nothing so terrible, especially at Paris, as unfounded suspicions; for it is impossible to destroy them.

This sketch of a figure so exquisitely natural, can give only a very faint idea of it. The brush of the Ingres alone could adequately render the proud forehead, the profuse hair, the majestic glance, and all the

thoughts that lurked beneath the peculiar tones of the complexion. There was a touch of everything in this woman. The poet might see in her Jeanne d'Arc and Agnes Sorel at one and the same time. But *there* also was the unknown woman,—the heart hidden beneath that deceptive envelope,—the heart of Eve,—the riches of evil, and the treasures of good,—sin and resignation, crime and self-devotion, the Donna Julia and the Haïdée of Byron's Don Juan.

The old musketeer very coolly outstayed all the other guests, and remained in the drawing-room of Madame Firmiani, who found him tranquilly seated in an arm-chair, and planted before her, with all the importunity of a fly, which we can only get rid of by killing it. The time-piece was pointing to two o'clock a.m.

"Madame," said the old nobleman, as Madame Firmiani rose in the hope that

her guest would understand it was her good pleasure that he should go away, "Madame, I am the uncle of Monsieur Octave de Camps." Madame Firmiani sat down again promptly without attempting to hide her emotion. In spite of his perspicacity the poplar-planter did not know whether it was shame or pleasure that drove the colour from her cheek. There are some pleasures which are always accompanied by a certain timorous shame—delightful emotions which the chastest mind would always like to veil. The more refined a woman is, the more does she desire to hide the raptures of her soul. Many women,—ah! how incomprehensible are their divine caprices—often wish to hear from every lip, a name which at other times they would desire to bury in their hearts.

The old nobleman did not at once

interpret Madame Firmiani's agitation in that sense; but you must forgive him—the old country gentleman was suspicious.

"Well, sir?" said Madame Firmiani, looking at him with one of those clear, lucid glances which we men can never read, because they interrogate us a little too forcibly.

"Well, madame," resumed the nobleman, "do you know what some one has been good enough to come to the heart of my province to tell me? That my nephew has ruined himself on your account, and the poor fellow is in a garret, while *you* live here in silk and gold. You will pardon me my rustic candour, for it may, perhaps, be very beneficial to you to know the calumnies—"

"Stop, sir," said Madame Firmiani, interrupting the nobleman with an imperious gesture; "I know all that; you are too

well-bred to dwell upon this subject, when I have begged you to quit it. You are too gallant in the old acceptation of the term," (she added with a light touch of irony), "not to perceive that you have no right whatever to question me. In short, it is ridiculous for me to defend myself. I hope that you will have a sufficiently good opinion of my character to believe me, when I say, that I have a profound contempt for money, although, having no fortune whatever, I married a man of immense wealth. I know not whether the gentleman who is your nephew be rich or poor; if I have received and do receive him, I consider him worthy to mix with my friends. All my friends, sir, respect each other; they know that I am not philosopher enough to receive persons whom I do not esteem. That may be want of charity; but my guardian angel has preserved in

me to this day a profound aversion to slander and improbity."

Although the tones of the voice were slightly tremulous during the opening phrase of this reply, the last words were uttered by Madame Firmiani with the self-possession of Célimène rallying the Misanthrope.

"Madame," resumed the count in a tone of emotion, "I am an old man, I am almost Octave's father; I ask, then, in advance, the humblest pardon, for the only question which I shall have the hardihood to put to you; and I give you my word as a loyal nobleman, that your answer shall be buried *there*." (As he said this, he laid his hand upon his heart with a genuinely religious gesture.) "Is the voice of slander right? is Octave your lover?"

"Sir," said she, "to any one but you, my only reply would be—a look; but to

you, and because you are *almost* the father of Monsieur de Camps, I will put this one question—'What would you think of a woman who should answer your question with a "yes"?' To confess our love to him whom we love, when he loves us—*that*—is well enough, when we are sure of being always loved; believe me, sir, it is an effort on our part, a reward for him; *but to another* . . . ."

Madame Firmiani did not conclude, but rose, bowed to the old gentleman, and vanished to her private apartments. Door after door, as it opened and closed, had a language of its own for the ears of the poplar-planter.

"What the plague!" said the old man to himself, "what a woman it is! she must be either a cunning jade, or an angel." And having thus delivered himself, he reached his hackney coach, the horses of

which had been, from time to time, pawing the pavement of the silent court. The driver had fallen asleep, after having bestowed a hundred curses on his *fare*.

At about eight o'clock the next morning, the old nobleman was to be seen mounting the staircase of a house in the Rue de l'Observance, in which Octave de Camps was living.

No one on earth could have been so surprised as was the young professor when he saw his uncle. The key was in the door, Octave's lamp was still burning; he had been sitting up all night.

"Well, Mr. Eccentric," said Monsieur de Bourbonne, seating himself in an arm-chair. "Since when has it been the fashion for a young man, sole heir to an uncle who has 26,000 francs a year from solid acres in Touraine, to make fun (observe the chastity of my style) of that

uncle? Are you aware that we used to respect such relatives as those? Come now, have you any fault to find with me? Have I not played my part of uncle well? Have I claimed respect at your hands? Have I refused to give you money? Have I shut my door in your face under the pretence that you came to peer into the state of my health? Is not your uncle the most easy-going and the least overbearing uncle in France? (I won't say Europe, because that would be *too* ambitious.) You write to me or not, at your pleasure; I live upon the affection you have sworn to me, and am preparing the nicest estate in the district for you, an estate which is the envy of the whole department; though, at the same time, I want to postpone leaving it to you as long as possible, an inclination which is, you will admit, very excusable? And my

gentleman sells his property, lives in lodgings fit only for a footman, and has neither servants nor establish—"

"Uncle."

"We are not talking about the uncle, but the nephew. I have a right to your confidence; so confess yourself forthwith. It is easier, I know *that*, by experience. Have you been gambling? Have you lost money on the Stock Exchange? Come, say, 'Uncle, I am a wretch,' and I'll embrace you. But if you tell me a lie, greater than those which I told at your age, I'll sell my property, buy an annuity, and resume the bad habits of my youth—if that be possible."

"Uncle."

"I saw your Madame Firmiani yesterday," said the uncle, gathering his fingers together and kissing the tips of them. "She is charming," he added; "you have

the king's approbation, and privilege, and the consent of your uncle—if that be of any service to you. As for the church's sanction, it is useless, I presume; the sacraments are, no doubt, too dear. Come, tell me, is it on *her* account that you have ruined yourself?"

"Yes, uncle."

"Ah, the jade, I could have bet upon it. In my time the ladies of the court were cleverer at ruining a man than your courtezans of the present day. In her I saw the last century renewed."

"Uncle," said Octave, with an air that was at the same time sad and gentle, "you deceive yourself; Madame Firmiani deserves your esteem, and all the idolatry of her admirers."

"Poor Youth will be always the same, then," said Monsieur de Bourbonne. "Well, go on; repeat to me the old, old stories.

You must know, however, that I am not a novice in gallantry."

"My good uncle, here is a letter which will tell you *all*," replied Octave, opening an elegant portfolio, a gift from *her*, no doubt. "When you have read it, I will finish what I have to tell you, and then will you know a Madame Firmiani, of whom the world knows—nothing."

"I have not my spectacles with me," said the uncle; "read it to me."

Octave began thus, "My dearest friend."

"You are on very intimate terms with this woman, then?"

"Of course, uncle."

"And you have not fallen out?"

"Fallen out!" repeated Octave quite astonished. "Why we are married—at Gretna Green."

"Well, then," resumed Monsieur de

Bourbonne, "why do you dine for forty sous?"

"Let me go on."

"That's quite right; I am listening."

Octave took up the letter again. Certain passages in it he read with the deepest emotion.

"My beloved husband, you have asked me to explain my sadness; has it passed then from my heart to my face, or have you only guessed it? Why should you not, since our hearts are so closely united? Besides, I cannot lie, and that perhaps is a misfortune. One of the essentials of the loving woman is to be always affectionate and gay. It may be that I ought to deceive you, but I should not like to do so, even if I could thereby increase or preserve the happiness which you give me, which you shower upon me, nay, with which you overwhelm me. Oh, my dear,

there is a world of gratitude in my love. And I wish to love you always, and boundlessly. Yes, I wish to be always proud of you. The glory of us women is altogether in the man we love. Esteem, consideration, honour, all is wrapped up in him who has taken all. Well, my angel has fallen. Yes, darling, your last confidence has tarnished my past felicity. From that moment I feel that I am humiliated in you, *you* whom I held to be the purest of men, as you are the most loving and tender. It shows what trust I have in your heart, which is still so young, when I make a confession which causes me inexpressible pain. What, my poor angel, your father stole his fortune, you know that he stole it, and—you keep it. *And you told me this attorney's trick, in a room filled with mute witnesses of our love, and you are a gentleman and believe yourself to be noble, and*

you are my lover, and you are only twenty-two. What a heap of monstrosities! I have sought excuses for you; I have ascribed your indifference to your giddy youth, I know that there is much of the child about you. It may be that you have not yet very seriously considered what fortune is, and what integrity is. Oh, what pain your laughter caused me! Only think; there is a ruined family, always mourning; young girls who perhaps curse you every day; an old man who says to himself every evening, 'I should not want bread if the father of Monsieur de Camps had not been a dishonest man.'"

"What," interrupted Monsieur de Bourbonne, "were you silly enough to tell this woman your father's affair with the Bourgneufs? Women understand much better now to squander a fortune than how to make one."

"They understand integrity. But let me go on, uncle."

"No authority on earth, Octave, has power to change the language of honour. Retire into your own conscience, and ask of it with what name the action to which you owe your money should be dubbed." Thereupon the nephew looked at the uncle, and the uncle bent his head.

"I will not tell you all the thoughts which beset me; they may all be summed up in one, which is this: I cannot respect a man who willingly soils himself for a sum of money, whatever be the amount. A hundred sous stolen at the card-table, or six times a hundred thousand francs resulting from a legal robbery, alike dishonour a man. I wish to tell you everything; and I will tell you that I consider myself *stained* by a love which formerly constituted all my happiness. There arises

from the bottom of my heart, a voice which my affection *cannot* stifle. Oh! I have cried to find that my conscience was stronger than my love. Should you commit a crime, I would hide you from human justice in my bosom if I could, but *there* my devotion would cease. Love, my angel, is to a woman the most unlimited confidence, combined with an inexplicable desire to venerate and to adore the being to whom she belongs. I have never imaged love but as a fire in which the noblest sentiments are purified, and which developes them all. Now, I have only one thing more to tell you: either come to me poor, and my love will be redoubled, if that be possible, or—give me up. If I don't see you any more, I know what remains for me to do.

"Now, understand me thoroughly; I do not want you to make restitution because

I advise you to make it. That act of justice must not be a sacrifice made to love. I am your wife, not your mistress; the question is not as to pleasing me, but as to inspiring me with the deepest esteem for you. If I am mistaken, if you have imperfectly explained to me your father's conduct, in short, if you have the least idea that your fortune is legitimate—oh, I would persuade myself that you do not deserve the least blame—decide in accordance with the voice of your conscience; act on your own impulse. A man who loves sincerely, as you love me, has too much regard for all the sanctity his wife ascribes to him, to be dishonest. I now reproach myself for having written what I have—a word would perhaps have been enough, and my preaching instinct has carried me away; so that I should like to be scolded just a little, but not too severely. My dear, as between us two, are not

you the ruler? You only should perceive your faults. Well now, master mine, will you dare to say that I understand nothing about political discussions?"

"Well, uncle," said Octave, whose eyes were filled with tears.

"But I see there is some more writing. Finish it, please."

"Oh, now, there is nothing but such things as are fit only for a lover's eye!"

"Right, quite right, my boy," said the old man. "I have had a good many amours myself, but I beg you to believe that I also have *loved*, 'Et ego in Arcadiâ:' only I don't understand why you give mathematical lessons."

"My dear uncle, I am your nephew, which in a couple of words, is as much as saying that I had made a hole in the capital left me by my father. After reading that letter, a complete change of feeling

came over me, and in one moment I paid all the arrears of my remorse. I could not describe to you the state of my mind when I was driving my cabriolet in the Bois. A voice cried to me, 'Is that horse yours?' While I was eating, I said to myself, 'Isn't this dinner stolen?' I was ashamed of myself. The younger my integrity was, the more ardent it was. I went at once to Madame Firmiani's. O God, uncle, that day I enjoyed heart-pleasures and soul-delights that were worth millions. With her I went through the account of what I owed to the Bourgneuf family; and against the advice of Madame Firmiani, I sentenced myself to pay interest at three per cent; but my entire fortune was not enough to discharge the whole amount. We were then so completely lovers, so completely husband and wife, that she could offer, and I accept, her savings."

"What, do you mean to tell me that this adorable woman, in addition to her virtues, lays by money?" cried the uncle.

"Don't laugh at her, uncle. Her position compels her to be very careful. Her husband went to Greece in 1820, and died there three years since. Up to this day she has found it impossible to procure legal proof of his death, and to obtain the will which he must have made in favour of his wife—an important document which has been lost, stolen, or has strayed in a country where the registers of social status are not kept as they are in France, and where there is no consul. Not knowing but that she may some day be called to an account, by ill-disposed relations of the deceased, she is obliged to maintain the strictest order; for she wishes to be able to quit her opulence, just in the same manner as Chateaubriand has just left the

ministry. Now *I* want to acquire a fortune, which shall be *my own*, so that, should my wife be ruined, I may restore her to affluence."

"And you told me nothing about all this, and did not come to me? Oh, nephew, consider, I love you well enough to pay your just debts, the debts of a gentleman. I am a tragedy-uncle,—*I will revenge myself!*"

"I know your revenges well, uncle; but let me enrich myself by my own industry. If you wish to oblige me, let me have just a thousand crowns per annum, until I want capital for some speculation. Look you, at this moment, I am so happy that my only business is to live. I give lessons in order that I may be independent. Oh! if you only knew what pleasure I felt in making restitution. After some searching, I succeeded in discovering the Bourgneufs.

They were in penury—almost destitute. They were living at St. Germain in a wretched house. The old father kept a lottery office; the daughters acted as housekeepers, and kept the books. The mother was almost always ill. The two daughters are charmingly beautiful, but they have learned in a hard school, how light the world holds portionless beauty. What a striking scene it was that I went in search of there. If I entered that house, the accomplice of a crime, I left it an honest man. I have cleansed my father's memory. Oh, uncle, I do not condemn him; so much passion, so much impetuosity enters into law-suits, that the most honest man in the world may sometimes go astray. Advocates can cast a gloss of justice over the most unfounded claims; the law abounds in syllogisms, which flatter the delusions of conscience, so

that judges have a *right* to go *wrong*. But my adventure was a genuine drama. To have been a providence, to have realized one of those vain wishes, such as 'if only it would rain down twenty thousand francs a year,'—that aspiration, which all of us formulate in fun—to chase away a look big with imprecations, and replace it by a look sublime in its gratitude, astonishment, and admiration; to fling wealth into the bosom of a family gathered together in the evening by the light of a wretched lamp, before a turf fire:—No! language cannot rise to such a scene. My extreme justice seemed to them unjust. In short, if there be a paradise, my father ought to be happy in it now. As for me, I am loved as no man ever was loved. Madame Firmiani has given me more than happiness; she has endowed me with a delicacy of feeling which perhaps I lacked. And so I call her

'my dear conscience,' one of those love phrases which correspond to certain secret harmonies of the heart. Integrity brings its reward; I now hope to be rich through my own exertions soon; I am at this moment engaged in the solution of an industrial problem, and if I succeed I shall be a millionaire."

"Oh, my child, you have your mother's heart," said the old man, restraining with difficulty the tears which moistened his eyes, as he thought of his sister.

At that moment, spite of the distance between the ground and the apartments of Octave de Camps, the young man and his uncle heard the noise made by the sudden stopping of a carriage.

"'Tis *she*," said Octave, "I know the horses by their way of pulling up."

And in fact Madame Firmiani very soon appeared.

"Ah!" said she, with a gesture of vexation, when she caught sight of Monsieur de Bourbonne. "But," continued she with a smile, "our uncle is not in the way. I came humbly to place myself upon my knees before my husband, and entreat him to accept my fortune. I have just received from the Austrian embassy, a document, which authentically establishes the death of Firmiani. This document, which has been drawn up under the directions of the Austrian Resident at Constantinople, is quite in form; and the will, which the valet had kept for me, is annexed to the document. Octave, you may take it all—let it be so; you are richer than I am, for," added she, placing her hand upon her husband's heart, "you have treasures *there* to which only God can add."

Then, overcome with joy, she buried her head in her husband's bosom.

"Formerly we used to *make love*, niece; now-a-days you *love*," said the uncle. "You women embrace the sum of all that is good and beautiful in humanity, for you are never chargeable with your errors; they always proceed from us men."

UNE DOUBLE FAMILLE.

TO MADAME LA COMTESSE LOUISE DE TURHEIM,
AS A TOKEN OF REMEMBRANCE AND
AFFECTIONATE RESPECT.

The Rue du Tourniquet St. Jean, formerly one of the darkest and most tortuous streets in the old quarter which surrounds the Hôtel de Ville, wound itself along by the side of the small gardens of the prefecture of Paris, and terminated in the Rue du Martroi just at the corner of an old wall which has now been pulled down. It was at this point that the turnstile, from which the street took its name, was situated. This turnstile was not destroyed till the year 1823, when the city of Paris

had a ball-room constructed upon the site of a little garden attached to the Hôtel de Ville, on the occasion of the entertainment given in honour of the Duc d'Angoulême, on his return from Spain. The widest part of the Rue du Tourniquet was where it debouched into the Rue de la Tixeranderie, and even at that point it was not five feet wide; so that in rainy weather black streams soon began to wash the feet of the old houses which lined the street, bearing with them the refuse deposited near the kerbstone by each household. The dust-carts being unable to pass through this gorge, its inhabitants looked to the storms to cleanse their ever-muddy street. And how, indeed, should it have been otherwise than muddy? When the summer sun was darting its perpendicular rays upon Paris, a sheet of gold, incisive as the blade of a sabre, would for a moment

illuminate the darkness of the street, but had no power to dry up the persistent moisture which crept from the ground-floor to the first storey of those black and silent houses. The inhabitants lighted their lamps at five o'clock in the afternoon in the month of June. In winter they were kept burning all day. Even up to the present time, if any bold pedestrian wants to go from the Marais to the quays, starting from the end of the Rue du Chaume, and following the Rues de l'Homme-Armé, des Billettes, and des Deux-Portes, which lead to the Rue Tourniquet St. Jean, he will fancy he has been walking under archways. Much as the chronicles have vaunted the splendours of old Paris, almost all its streets resembled this damp and sombre maze—in which the antiquary may still find some historic peculiarities to admire. Thus, so long as the house which was

situated at the corner of the Rue du Tourniquet and the Rue de la Tixeranderie existed, the observer might there behold the traces of two large iron rings fixed into the wall, and being a remnant of those chains which the constable used, in bygone days, to stretch across the street for the safety of the public. In the construction of this house, which was remarkable for its antiquity, there had been displayed such precautions as attested the insalubrity of these ancient dwellings; for to render the ground-floor more wholesome, the vaults of the cellar had been raised some feet above the soil, and one had to mount three steps in order to enter the house. The doorway described a complete arch, the keystone of which was adorned with a woman's head, and with some time-worn arabesques. In that part of the ground-floor which looked upon, and received its light from,

the Rue du Tourniquet, there were three windows, the sills of which were about a man's height from the ground. These windows were protected by thick iron bars, placed wide apart and terminating in a round projection, like that which finishes off the gratings of bakers' shops. If any inquisitive passer-by cast his eyes into the two rooms of which this apartment consisted, it was impossible for him to see anything in them during the day-time; for in order to discover in the second room two beds with green serge hangings, placed close together under the wood-work of an old alcove, the July sun was needed. But towards evening, about three o'clock, when once the candle was lighted, there might be seen through the window of the first room, an old woman seated on a stool at the corner of a fireplace, and engaged in coaxing a chafing-dish, on which one of

those ragoûts, such as porteresses are skilful in concocting, was simmering. A few cooking utensils and household implements might be seen in the clear-obscure hanging on the wall. About this hour an old table placed upon an X-shaped stand, but with no cloth upon it, was spread with a few pewter covers and the dish which the old woman had cooked. In this room, which was both a kitchen and a drawing-room, there were three miserable chairs. Above the fireplace was a broken mirror, a tinder-box, three glasses, some matches, and a large white pot very much chipped. Yet there was something pleasing about the whole aspect of the room. Floor, utensils, fireplace, and all partook of the air of order and economy which reigned in that chill and dark abode. The pale and wrinkled face of the old woman was in keeping with the

obscurity of the street, and the dinginess of the house. Had you seen her asleep in her chair, you would have said that she was attached to the house, just as a snail is attached to its brown shell. The face of the old dame, which in spite of its assumed good nature, wore a mischievous look, was surmounted by a round flat cap made of tulle, beneath which her white hair could easily be seen. Her large grey eyes were as calm as the street itself, and the numerous furrows of her countenance might be compared to the crevices in the walls. Whether she had been born in poverty, or had lapsed from former splendour, she seemed to have been long resigned to her dull existence. From sun-rise until evening, the old woman would sit in the second room, in front of the last window, and facing a young girl; except when she was engaged in the preparation of a

meal, or when with a basket on her arm she sallied forth in search of provisions. With this exception she spent the whole day in the other room before the last window, seated opposite to the girl. At all hours of the day those who passed that way could see this young workwoman sitting in an old red-velvet arm-chair, her head bending over her embroidery frame, hard at work. Meanwhile her mother, with a green tambour upon her knees, was making tulle; but her fingers worked the bobbins with painful effort; her sight had grown weak, for on her sexagenary nose she wore a pair of those old-fashioned spectacles, which keep their place at the end of the nostril by dint of compression. At night these two industrious creatures would place between them a lamp, whose light, passing through two globes filled with water, would enable the one to see

the finest threads, furnished by the bobbins of her tambour, and the other to follow the most delicate designs traced upon the stuff which she was embroidering. The bend in the iron bars had enabled the girl to place upon the window-sill, a wooden box filled with earth, and containing some sweet peas, some nasturtiums, a poor little honey-suckle, and some convolvuluses, whose fragile stalks crept round the bars. The pallor of the flowers which sprang from these stunted plants harmonized with all the surroundings, and gave a sad and touching aspect to the picture presented by the window, whose embrasure formed a good frame to the faces of the two women. A chance glimpse of this interior fixed in the mind of the most egotistical passer-by, a complete image of the life led by the needlewomen of Paris; for needlewoman pure and simple, the embroiderer

seemed to be. Few persons reached the turnstile without asking themselves how a young girl living in such a cellar contrived to preserve her fresh complexion. If a student passed through the street on his way to the Quartier Latin, his lively imagination would compare that obscure and vegetable existence to that of the ivy, which drapes the cold wall, or of those peasants who are born to toil and die unknown to the world which they have fed. The man of independent means, after having cast a landlord's eye upon the house, would say to himself, "What will become of these two women if embroidery should go out of fashion?" Among the persons who were compelled to pass through the street at certain fixed hours, in order to reach their office at the Hôtel de Ville or the Palais, there might perhaps be found some charitable soul. Perhaps

some widower, or some Adonis of forty, by dint of sounding the recesses of that melancholy existence, had begun to found upon the poverty of the mother and daughter, hopes of achieving an inexpensive triumph over the heart of the innocent little needlewoman, whose plump and agile hands, fresh-looking neck, and white skin (for which latter charm she was no doubt indebted to her abode in that sunless street) excited his admiration. Perhaps some worthy civil servant, with a salary of 1200 francs, daily witnessing the young girl's industry, and respecting the purity of her morals, was waiting for some promotion in order to join one obscure existence to another obscure existence, one life of incessant toil to another life of incessant toil, and ready to offer at least the support of a manly arm and a love peaceful, but as colourless as the

flowers in the window. The dull grey eyes of the mother kindled with vague hopes. In the morning, after the most humble of breakfasts, she would go back to her tambour as an excuse, rather than from necessity, for she would lay her spectacles upon a little work-table of red wood, as old as herself, and from half-past eight till about ten, pass in review the habitual passengers, catching their glances, making remarks upon their gait, dress, and features, and seeming to be offering them her daughter for sale; so eagerly did her tell-tale eyes, with oglings worthy of the side-scenes of a theatre seek to establish sympathetic feelings between herself and the pedestrians.

It was easy to see that this review was a spectacle to *her;* perhaps her only pleasure. The daughter rarely raised her head. Modesty, or, it might be, the pain-

ful consciousness of her penury, seemed to chain her eyes to the embroidery frame; so that she only showed her anxious face to the passengers when her mother had uttered some exclamation of surprise. The civil-service clerk with a new coat on, or the regular passenger appearing with a lady on his arm, might then catch sight of the somewhat *retroussé* nose of the needlewoman, her small rosy mouth and grey eyes, that, in spite of her exhausting toil, sparkled with life. Her laborious vigils told no tales, except in a circle more or less white, traced beneath either eye, upon the fresh skin of her cheeks. The poor child seemed to have been born into the world for love and gaiety. Love had painted above her eyelids two perfect arches, and had given her so thick a forest of chestnut-coloured hair, that she might have hidden herself behind it, as under a

pavilion impenetrable to a lover's eye. And gaiety had given life to her mobile nostrils, had planted two dimples in her unwasted cheeks, and taught her quickly to forget her trials. Gaiety, that flower of hope, had lent her strength to look without a shudder upon the arid path of life.

The hair of the young girl was always carefully combed. She, like all the needle-girls of Paris, deemed her toilette complete when she had smoothed her hair, and shaped into two crescents the little tufts which played on either temple, and contrasted with the white skin. So gracefully did the hair spring from her forehead, and so charming an idea of her youth and beauty did the line of *bistre*, clearly traced upon her neck, impart, that the observer who saw her bending over her work without allowing the noise to induce her to raise her head, would accuse her of coquetry.

Promises so seductive excited the curiosity of many a young man, who would look round in the hope of seeing that modest countenance—but to no purpose.

"Caroline, we have another *habitué* now, better than any of the old ones."

These words, uttered in a low tone by the mother, one morning in the month of August, 1815, had overcome the young needlewoman's indifference. She looked into the street, but looked in vain. The stranger was already at a distance.

"Which way did he go?"

"He is sure to pass by again at four o'clock. I shall see him coming, and will touch your foot to give you notice. I am sure that he will go by again, for he has gone through our street for the last three days. But he is unpunctual. The first day he went by at six o'clock, the day before yesterday at four, and yesterday at

three. I remember to have seen him formerly, from time to time. He must be some clerk at the Prefecture, who has changed his quarters in the Marais. Well," she added after a glance into the street, " our gentleman in the maroon coat has taken to a wig; how it has changed him."

It would seem that the gentleman in the maroon coat was the last of the regulars—the one who closed the daily procession; since the old mother resumed her spectacles and took up her work again with a sigh.

As she did so, she cast at her daughter so singular a glance, that Lavater himself would have been puzzled to analyze it. It was a combination of admiration, gratitude, a touch of hope for a better future, and pride in having so pretty a daughter.

In the evening, at about four o'clock, the old woman touched Caroline's foot; she looked up in time to see the new actor, whose periodical passage was to give fresh life to the scene. This man was tall, slim, and pale; he was dressed in black, and was about forty years of age. There was something solemn in his gait and bearing. When his hazel and penetrating eye encountered the dull glance of the old woman, it made her tremble; she credited him with a gift or habit of reading what was passing in people's breasts. His address must be as freezing as the air of the street. Was the somewhat green and earthy hue of that terrible face, the result of excessive toil or of delicate health? This was a problem to which the old mother found twenty different solutions. But the next day, Caroline, and only Caroline, discovered on that brow—which

was so prone to knit—the traces of protracted mental suffering. On the slightly hollow cheeks of the stranger might be seen the mark of that seal which sorrow sets upon its subjects, as if it would leave them the consolation of being able to recognize each other with a fraternal eye, and unite their strength in resistance. At first, the eye of the young girl brightened, from innocent curiosity simply; but as the stranger receded in the distance, looking like the last mourner in a funeral procession, her look was one of gentle sympathy. Between the great heat of the weather and his own absence of mind, the stranger had not replaced his hat as he passed through the close unwholesome street, so that Caroline had an opportunity of observing the appearance of sternness which the stranger's hair, rising brush-like from his forehead, gave

to the features. The vivid, but not agreeable impression produced on Caroline's mind by the aspect of this man, was different from any that had been created by any other of the *habitués*. Now, for the first time, she felt compassion for some one, other than her mother and herself. To the queer conjectures which supplied food to the irritating loquacity of her mother, she made no answer; but kept passing her long needle up and down through the tight-stretched tulle. She was sorry she had seen so little of the stranger, and waited for the next day ere passing a definitive sentence upon him. Never before had any of the frequenters of the street caused her such a number of reflections. As a rule the suppositions of the mother, who hoped to find in every passer-by a protector for her daughter, were greeted only with a mournful smile. If such ideas, thus

imprudently suggested, aroused no evil thoughts in Caroline's heart, her indifference must be imputed to that incessant and, alas, indispensable toil which was devouring the forces of her precious youth, and must infallibly, in the long-run, trouble the clearness of her eyes, and steal from her pure cheeks the delicate colour with which they were still tinged. For about two whole months *the black gentleman*—such was his nickname—was very capricious in his proceedings. He did not always pass through the Rue du Tourniquet; the old woman often saw him in the evening, without having seen him in the morning; he did not return at fixed times like the other civil servants, who were as good as a clock to Madame Crochard. In short, but for that first encounter of glances, from which the old woman had imbibed a kind of dread, the

eye of the stranger had never seemed to take the slightest notice of the picturesque group presented by the two female gnomes. Two large gates and the dark shop of a dealer in old iron were, with the exception of some grated windows which lighted the staircases of some neighbouring houses, the only openings into the Rue du Tourniquet, at the period of which we are speaking; so that the slender curiosity of the passer could not be laid to the score of dangerous rivalries. Madame Crochard was necessarily tantalized to see her *black gentleman* always lost in serious thought, keeping his eyes fixed upon the ground, or looking straight before him as if he would read the future in the fog of the Rue du Tourniquet. Nevertheless, one morning towards the end of September, the playful head of Caroline Crochard stood out so clearly against the dim back-

ground of her room, and looked so fresh amid the tardy flowers, and the withered foliage entwined about the window bars, while the everyday scene presented such contrasts of light and shadow, of red and white, so happily combined with the muslin which the dainty little workwoman was looping up, and with the red and brown tints of the armchairs, that the stranger looked very attentively at the living picture. It must be admitted that the old mother, weary of the indifference of her *black gentleman*, had adopted the plan of making such a clicking with her bobbins, that the sad and careworn passer was perhaps compelled by the unwonted noise to look at her abode. The stranger only exchanged with Caroline one glance, a glance rapid, it is true, but long enough to bring their minds into contact, and to inspire them with the presentiment that

they would think of one another. When, at four o'clock in the afternoon, the stranger returned, Caroline distinguished the sound of his footsteps upon the echoing pavement, and there was a kind of premeditation in the looks which they exchanged. The eyes of the passenger were beaming with a benevolent expression, and Caroline blushed, while the face of the old mother assumed a satisfied air. Reckoning from that memorable morning, with very few exceptions, not unnoticed by the two women, *the black gentleman* passed through the Rue du Tourniquet twice a day. From the irregularity of his hour for returning, they came to the conclusion that he was not so soon released from his duties, nor so strictly punctual as a subaltern clerk. During the first three winter months Caroline and the stranger saw each other thus, during the time he took to traverse

the piece of pavement stretching from the door past the three windows of the house. From day to day this rapid interview assumed a character of benevolent intimacy, and ended by becoming almost brotherly. Caroline and the stranger appeared from the first to understand each other, and finally, by dint of examining each other's faces, they gained a profound knowledge of them. This passing glance soon became, as it were, a visit which the stranger owed to Caroline. If *the black gentleman* happened to pass without greeting her with the half-formed smile upon his eloquent mouth, or the friendly glance of his brown eyes, there was something wanting in her day. She was like those old men to whom the reading of the newspaper has become so great a pleasure, that the morning after a grand festivity, they go away quite disconcerted, asking as much through inad-

vertence as impatience, for the sheet which helps them to fill for the moment the void of their existence. But these fugitive interviews possessed, both for Caroline and the stranger, all the interest of a familiar chat between two friends. The young girl was no more able to conceal from the intelligent eye of her silent friend her sadness, uneasiness, or anxiety, than he could hide from Caroline his preoccupation.

"He had some trouble yesterday," was a thought which often sprang up in the heart of the needlewoman, when she beheld the changed features of *the black gentleman*. "Oh, he must have been hard at work," was another exclamation, which certain slight alterations, known to Caroline, would call forth. The stranger, on his part, could tell when the young girl had been working on Sunday, in order to finish the

dress in the pattern of which he took an interest. When rent-day approached he saw the pretty face clouded with anxiety, and could tell when Caroline had sat up late; but he had especially remarked how the sad thoughts which disfigured the gay and delicate features of the young face disappeared, as their acquaintance ripened. When winter came to wither the stems and leaves of the window-garden, and the casement was closed, the stranger noticed, with a smile of harmless mischief, the extraordinary cleanness of the glass, to the height of Caroline's head. In the scanty fire, and certain patches of red which heightened the colour of the two women, he saw the indigence of the household; but if painful compassion could be read in his eyes, Caroline met it with assumed gaiety. The feelings, however, which had budded in their hearts had remained buried

there. No event happened to reveal to either the strength or extent of the other's feelings. They did not know even the sound of each other's voices. The two dumb friends avoided involving themselves in a closer union—as if it were a misfortune. Each of them seemed to dread inflicting on the other a misery more weighty than that which they took pleasure in sharing. Was it the modesty of friendship which checked them at that point? Was it that selfish apprehension, or that atrocious distrust which separates all the inhabitants of a populous city? Was it that the silent voice of conscience gave them warning of the approaching danger? It would be impossible to explain the sentiment which made them half enemies, half friends, half indifferent and half attached, as much united by instinct, as separated in fact. Perhaps

they wanted to preserve their illusions. At times, one would come to the conclusion that the stranger feared he might hear some coarse language from those fresh lips, which were as pure as a flower, and that Caroline did not deem herself good enough for that mysterious being, whose mien and bearing spoke of wealth and power. As for Madame Crochard, that tender mother, almost discontented with the indecision of Caroline, looked sullenly at her *black gentleman*, at whom she had formerly cast smiling glances that were almost servile. Never had she so bitterly complained to her daughter, of being compelled to do the cooking at her time of life; never had her rheumatism and her catarrh extorted from her so many groans; and lastly, she had not been able to make as many ells of tulle that winter as Caroline had till then counted on. Such being the

situation of affairs, and it being now the end of December, the time when bread is always dearest, and when the scarcity of grain, which made the year 1816 so hard for poor people, was beginning to be felt, the stranger noticed upon the face of the young girl whose very name was unknown to him, the fearful traces of some secret thought, not to be dissipated by his benevolent smile. Soon afterwards he could read in Caroline's eyes the wan effects of nightwork. On one of the last nights of that month, the stranger returned towards one o'clock a. m. through the Rue du Tourniquet St. Jean. The night was so silent that long before reaching Caroline's house he could hear the querulous voice of the old mother, and the more mournful tones of the young sempstress mingling shrilly with the whistling snowstorm. He tried to creep up slowly, and at the risk of

being arrested, ensconced himself beneath the window, to listen to the mother and daughter, while he watched them through the largest of the holes which gashed the curtains of yellowish muslin, and made them look like large cabbage-leaves gnawed into holes by caterpillars. The inquisitive passenger saw a stamped document upon the table, which stood between the two frames and supported the lamp with its two water-globes. He saw at once that it was a summons. Madame Crochard was crying, and Caroline's voice had a guttural sound, which marred the natural sweetness and gentleness of its tones.

"Why distress yourself so, mother? Monsieur Molineux will not sell us up, or turn us out before I have finished this dress. Two nights more and I shall take it to Madame Roguin's."

"And what if she makes you wait as she always does, and will the price of the dress pay the baker as well?"

The spectator of this scene was so much in the habit of reading faces that he saw, at least so he fancied, as much affectation in the mother's sorrow, as genuineness in that of the daughter. He suddenly disappeared, but returned a short time afterwards. On looking through the slit in the muslin, he saw that the mother was in bed, while the young girl, with her head bent over her frame, was working with indefatigable assiduty; on the table close to the summons lay a piece of bread, cut in the form of a triangle, and placed there, no doubt, for the young girl to eat during the night, while reminding her of the recompense of her courage. The stranger, trembling with pity and sorrow, threw his purse through a broken pane to the very

feet of the young girl. Then, without staying to enjoy her surprise, he decamped with beating heart and burning cheek. The next day the sad and unsociable stranger assumed a preoccupied air as he passed by; but he could not evade the gratitude of Caroline, who had thrown the window open, and was amusing herself by digging up with a knife the soil in the snow-covered box—a pretext whose ingenious clumsiness showed her benefactor that this time she did not wish to see him *through* the glass. The sempstress, with her eyes full of tears, bowed to the stranger, as if to say, "I can only pay you with my heart." But *the black gentleman* looked as if he did not at all understand this expression of genuine gratitude. As he repassed in the evening, Caroline, who was engaged in re-pasting a sheet of paper over the broken pane, displayed the enamel of her gleaming

teeth in a smile that was full of promises. Thenceforth *the black gentleman* sought another thoroughfare, and was seen no more in the Rue du Tourniquet. One Saturday morning, in the early part of the ensuing May, Caroline espied between the two black rows of houses a small bit of blue sky, and while watering out of a tumbler the root of her honey-suckle, said to her mother,—

"Mamma, we must go for a walk at Montmorency to-morrow." The joyous phrase had scarcely passed her lips when *the black gentleman* went by, sadder and more dejected than ever. The modest but kindly glance which Caroline cast at him might well be taken for an invitation. Accordingly when, on the following day, Madame Crochard, dressed in a merino robe of reddish brown, a silk bonnet, and an imitation Cashmere shawl with large

stripes, presented herself at the corner of the Rue du Faubourg St. Denis and the Rue d'Enghien, for the purpose of choosing a *coucou*, she found her stranger standing there, like a man who is waiting for his wife. A smile of pleasure chased the furrows from the stranger's face when he saw Caroline. Her little feet were cased in puce-coloured prunello. Her white dress, the sport of a wind that would have been treacherous to an ill-made woman, displayed her attractive figure. Her face, shaded by a rice-straw hat, lined with rose-coloured silk, was lighted up, as it were, with a ray from heaven. Her large puce-coloured sash set off to great advantage a very slender waist. Her hair parted into two bands of bistre over her snowy forehead, gave her an air of candour which there was nothing in the rest of her features to counteract. Joy seemed to

make Caroline's heart as light as the straw of her hat; but when she caught sight of *the black gentleman*, there was kindled in her breast a hope, which at once eclipsed her dress and beauty. It was perhaps this sudden revelation of the joy occasioned by his presence, that determined him to be the travelling companion of the little needlewoman; for at first he seemed undecided. He hired a cabriolet with a decent horse, to go to Saint-Leu-Taverny, and offered Madame Crochard and her daughter a place in it. The mother accepted the offer without waiting for it to be repeated; but as soon as the cabriolet had reached the road to St. Denis, she took it into her head to have some scruples, and uttered timidly polite fears that the presence of two women might cause their companion some inconvenience.

"Perhaps you wished to go to St.

Denis alone, sir," said she with affected good nature. But she soon began to complain about the heat, and especially about her cold, which had not, so she said, allowed her to close her eyes the whole night through. So, suiting the action to the word, she seèmed to be fast asleep, almost ere the carriage had reached St. Denis. Some of her snores seemed to *the black gentleman* to be extremely suspicious, and as he looked at the old woman, he frowned with an air of singular distrust.

"Oh, she is asleep," said Caroline artlessly, "she did not cease coughing the whole night through. She must be very tired."

The only response of her companion was a subtle smile which seemed to say to the young girl, "you innocent creature, you don't know your mother." Nevertheless,

when the carriage was bowling along the road in the long avenue of poplars which leads to Eaubonne, *the black gentleman* in spite of his suspiciousness, came to the conclusion that Madame Crochard was really asleep. Perhaps, also, he did not care to pursue his investigations into the genuineness of the slumber, any further. Whether the beauty of the sky, the pure country air, and the intoxicating perfumes of the first shoots of the poplar-tree, and of the flowers of the willow, and the white thorn, had caused his heart to unfold itself as nature was unfolding herself; whether longer self-restraint was becoming irksome to him, or Caroline's sparkling eyes reflected the disquiet of his own, *the black gentleman* began a conversation with his young companion, that was as vague as the undulating movements of the tree swaying in the breeze, as rambling as the wandering

flight of the butterfly in the blue sky, as illogical as the melodious murmur of the fields, though filled like that with a mysterious love. At this season of the year the country trembles like a bride who has just donned her wedding-dress, and bids the coldest heart rejoice. Quitting the dark streets of the Marais for the first time since the last autumn, and plunged into the midst of the harmonious and picturesque vale of Montmorency; passing through it in the morning with its boundless expanse before the eye; turning from that to eyes which also speak of infinity by expressing love, who would not melt? what lips would keep a secret? The stranger found Caroline gay rather than witty, affectionate rather than well-informed; but, if her laugh was giddy, her language showed that her feelings were genuine. As the young girl replied to the

skilful questionings of her companion, with that lavish outpouring of the heart which is characteristic of the lower classes, who disdain the reticence of the denizens of the world, the face of *the black gentleman* grew animated, and seemed to gain new life. His countenance gradually lost the sadness which had contracted his features; then, tint by tint, assumed an air of youth and beauty, which made Caroline quite proud and happy. The pretty embroiderer guessed that her protector had been so long weaned from tenderness and love, that he had ceased to believe in womanly devotion. At length an unexpected sally of Caroline's light tongue removed the last veil which had concealed the real youthfulness and native character of the stranger's face. He seemed to bid an eternal farewell to the ideas that had troubled him, and began to display the vivacity which

underlay his solemn face. The chit-chat became by imperceptible degrees, so intimate that when the carriage stopped at the first houses in the straggling village of Saint-Leu, Caroline had begun to call the stranger "Monsieur Roger." Then for the first time the old lady woke up.

"Caroline, she must have heard all we have been saying," whispered Roger to the young girl suspiciously.

Caroline's answer was a charming smile of incredulity which scattered the dark cloud that fear of some scheme on the part of the mother had brought to the brow of the suspicious man. Without expressing any surprise, Madame Crochard approved of everything, and followed her daughter and Monsieur Roger into the park of Saint-Leu, whither the two young people had agreed to go, to see the laugh-

ing prairies and perfumed groves, which the taste of Queen Hortense has made so celebrated.

"My God, how beautiful it is!" said Caroline, as, mounted on the top of the green slope, whence rises the forest of Montmorency, she saw at her feet the vast valley unfolding its sinuosities sown with villages, the blue horizon of its hills, its steeples, fields, and prairies, while the whisper of the vale, like the murmur of the sea, stole to her ear and died. The three travellers skirted the banks of an artificial stream, and reached the Swiss valley, whose cottage more than once received Queen Hortense and Napoleon.

When Caroline had seated herself with religious respect upon the moss-grown bench on which kings and princesses and the emperor had rested, Madame Crochard manifested a desire to gain a nearer view

of a suspension bridge joining two rocks, which was to be seen in the distance, and directed her steps towards that rustic curiosity, leaving her child under the care of Monsieur Roger, but telling him that she should keep an eye upon them.

"And do you mean to tell me, my poor little creature," cried Roger, "that you have never sighed for wealth and the enjoyments of luxury? Don't you sometimes wish to wear the handsome dresses which you embroider?"

"I should not be telling you the truth, Monsieur Roger, if I said that I never think of the happiness which the rich enjoy. Oh, yes, I often think, especially when I am going to sleep, of the pleasure I should find in seeing my poor mother not obliged at her time of life to go through all kinds of weather to fetch our little necessaries.

I should like to have a charwoman to take her her coffee, well sweetened with white sugar, in the morning before she gets up. She loves novel reading, poor old soul; well, I would rather see her wearing her eyes out over her favourite reading, than doing nothing but moving her bobbins from morning till night. She would want a little good wine too. In short, I should like to see her happy, she is so good."

"She has shown you her goodness then?"

"Oh, yes," replied the young girl in a low voice. Then, after a brief interval of silence, during which the two young people looked at Madame Crochard, who, having reached the middle of the rustic bridge, was shaking her finger at them, Caroline continued,—

"Oh, yes, she has proved it to me.

What care she took of me when I was little ! She sold her last bits of plate in order to apprentice me to the old maid who taught me embroidering. And then, my poor father ; what trouble she took to make his last moments pass comfortably ! " As this thought crossed her mind the young girl shuddered and covered her face with her two hands. " Ah, bah, let us never think of bygone evils," said she, trying to resume a cheerful look. She coloured when she saw Roger was affected by her words ; but did not dare to look at him.

" What was your father, then ? " he asked.

" My father was an opera-dancer before the revolution," said she, in the most natural manner possible, " and my mother was a chorus singer. My father, who used to marshall the troops at the theatre, was accidentally present at the taking of the

Bastille. He was recognized by some of the assailants, who asked him if he who commanded sham assaults on the stage, could not lead a real attack well. My father who was a brave man, accepted their proposal, headed the insurgents, and was rewarded with the grade of captain in the army of the Sambre et Meuse, where he behaved so well as to gain rapid promotion; he became a colonel; but he was so severely wounded at Lutzen, that he returned to Paris only to die, after a year's illness. The Bourbons came back, my mother could get no pension, and we sank back into such deep poverty, that we were compelled to work for a living. For some time past the good soul has been ailing, and I have never seen her so little resigned; she complains, and I can understand it; she has tasted the sweets of a happy existence. As for me, who cannot regret plea-

sures which I have never known, I only ask of Heaven one thing."

"What is that?" asked Roger quickly: (he seemed pensive.)

"That women may always wear embroidered tulle, so that work may never fall short."

The frankness of these confessions secured the young man's interest; he looked at Madame Crochard with a less hostile eye, as with tardy steps she returned to them.

"Well, my children, have you had a good chat?" she inquired, with a half-indulgent, half-bantering air. "When one thinks, Monsieur Roger, that *le petit caporal* has sat where you are now sitting," she resumed, after a moment's silence. "Poor man," she added, "my husband loved him, that he did. Ah! Crochard did well to die, for he could not have endured to know that he is where *they* have put him."

Roger put his finger to his lips, and the good woman nodded her head, and said gravely, "Enough, I'll keep a close mouth and a still tongue. But," added she, opening the folds of her dress and displaying a cross with its red riband, fastened round her neck by a bit of black silk, "*they* won't prevent me from wearing what *the other* gave to my poor Crochard, and I will certainly have it buried with me. . . ."

On hearing these words, which would at that time be deemed seditious, Roger interrupted the old mother by rising abruptly, and they returned to the village through the alleys of the park. The young man left them for a few moments, to go and order something to eat at the best eating-house in Taverny; he then returned for the two women, and took them to the house through the forest paths. The dinner was gay. Roger was no longer the ill-omened

shadow that used formerly to pass through the Rue du Tourniquet; rather than *the black gentleman*, he now resembled a confident youth, ready to swim with the current of existence, like those two heedless and industrious women, who might perhaps be wanting bread to-morrow. He seemed to be under the influence of youthful joys, his smile was caressing and childlike. When towards five o'clock sundry glasses of champagne brought the dinner to an end, Roger was the first to suggest that they should join the village ball beneath the chestnut-trees, where he and Caroline danced together. There was a meaning in the pressure of their hands, their beating hearts were inspired by the same hope; and beneath the blue sky, in the red horizontal rays of the setting sun, their looks shone with such radiance as to dim the light of heaven. What strange power in

an idea and a desire! Nothing seemed impossible to these two beings. In these magic moments, when pleasure casts its glamour even on the future, the heart foretells nothing but delight. That bright day had already created, for these two beings, memories with which nothing in their past existence could compare. Is, then, the spring more grateful than the stream, desire more enchanting than enjoyment, hope more attractive than possession?

"Ah, then, the day is ended!"

This exclamation escaped the stranger's lips, when the dance was over. Caroline, seeing that a slight touch of sadness was stealing back to his face, looked at him with an air of compassion.

"Why should you not be as happy in Paris as here?" said she. "Is happiness to be found only at Saint-Leu? It seems to

me, that I cannot be unhappy anywhere now!"

Roger trembled when he heard these words, the offspring of that sweet self-abandonment which ever leads women farther than they would go, just as prudery often makes them seem more cruel than they really are.

For the first time, since that glance which had been in some sort the commencement of their friendship, Caroline and Roger harboured the same thought. If they did not give expression to it, they felt it at the same time, through the medium of a mutual impression, which resembled the warmth of a grateful fire, consoling them for the chill of winter. Then, as if they dreaded their mutual silence, they walked to the place where the carriage was waiting for them. But before they got into it, they took each other's hands like brother

and sister, and ran on in front of Madame Crochard, down a dark avenue. When they had lost sight of the white tulle bonnet which, peeping through the foliage, showed them where the old woman was, Roger cried with troubled voice and beating heart, " Caroline ? " The young girl, recognizing the passion that breathed in that interrogation, stepped back a pace or two, confused ; still she held out her hand, which was ardently kissed, then quickly withdrawn, for rising on tip-toe, Caroline had caught sight of her mother. Madame Crochard pretended that she saw nothing ; as if, in memory of her former calling, she was only called upon to figure there in an *aparté*.

The love affair of these two young people was carried no further in the Rue du Tourniquet. If you would find Caroline and Roger now, you must transport yourself to the centre of modern Paris, to those

new-built houses which seem to have been constructed expressly for young couples to pass their honeymoon in them. Paint and paper, like the pair, are new; the decorations like the love, are in their first bloom. Everything is in harmony with young impressions and effervescent desire. There stood in the middle of the Rue Taitbout, a house whose freestone was still white, and the columns of its door and vestibule free from stains, while its walls shone with that coquettish style of painting which our first relations with England had rendered fashionable. On the second floor of this house the architect had arranged a little dwelling, as if he had guessed what its destination would be. A neat and simple anteroom, lined breast-high with stucco, communicated with a drawing-room and a small dining-room. Beyond the drawing-room was a pretty bedchamber, and ad-

joining that, a bath-room. The chimney-pieces were furnished throughout with tall mirrors in tasteful frames. The doors were ornamented with refined arabesques, and the cornices were of the purest style. An amateur would have recognized there, better than elsewhere, that knowledge of distinction and ornament which is characteristic of our modern architects. Caroline had occupied these apartments for about a month. They had been furnished by one of those upholsterers who follow the directions of the artist. A succinct description of the most important room will suffice to give an idea of the marvels which this little abode presented to the eyes of Caroline when Roger installed her in it.

Hangings of grey material enlivened by borders of green silk, adorned the walls of her bedroom. The chairs, covered with light kerseymere, were of the slight and

graceful form prescribed by the latest caprices of fashion. A commode of some indigenous wood inlaid with brown lines guarded the treasures of the wardrobe. There was a writing-table of similar description for the inditement of billets-doux on perfumed paper. The bed, with its antique drapery, could not fail to inspire voluptuous ideas, by the softness of its elegantly arranged muslins. Its curtains of grey silk, with their green tassels, were always drawn so as to exclude the light. The bronze timepiece represented Cupid crowning Psyche; and lastly a carpet with gothic designs upon a reddish ground brought out in full relief the accessories of this abode of pleasure. In front of a Psyche stood a little toilet-table, and seated before it was the ex-embroiderer, growing impatient over the science of Plaisir, a celebrated hair-dresser.

"Do you expect to finish my head to-day?" said she.

"Madame's hair is so long and thick," replied Plaisir.

Caroline could not help smiling. The flattery of the hairdresser had no doubt awakened in her heart a recollection of the enthusiastic praise which her friend bestowed upon the beauty of the tresses which he so strongly admired.

When the hairdresser had gone, the lady's maid came to hold a council with Caroline as to the toilette which would please Roger best. It was then the begining of September, 1816, and the weather was cold, so that choice was made of a dress of green grenadine, trimmed with chinchilla. As soon as her toilette was complete, Caroline rushed to the drawing-room, and opened a window leading to the elegant balcony which ornamented the front of the house.

There she stood with folded arms, in a charming posture, not in order to attract the admiration of the passengers, and see them turning their heads to look at her, but that she might command the boulevard at the end of the Rue Taitbout. This prospect, which one might compare to the slit made by actors in the curtain of a theatre, enabled Caroline to catch sight of a multitude of elegant carriages, and a number of people sweeping on with the rapidity of Chinese shadows.

The whilom sempstress of the Rue du Tourniquet not knowing whether Roger would come on foot or in a carriage, scrutinized in turn the pedestrians and the tilburies, those light vehicles imported into France by the English. Mingled expressions of mutiny and love chased each other over her youthful features, when, after watching for a quarter of an hour, neither

her piercing eye nor her heart warned her of the approach of him whom she was expecting. What contempt, what utter disregard for all the beings who were bustling about like ants beneath her feet, might be read upon that beautiful face. Her grey eyes danced and sparkled with mischief. Absorbed in her passion, she avoided homage with as much care as the very proudest take to reap it during their walk in Paris. Little indeed did she reck whether the impression made by her cream-white complexion, or by the little foot jutting out from the balcony, or the tantalizing picture of her lively eyes and daintily retroussé nose, would on the morrow be erased from the memory of the admiring passenger, or not. She saw but one face, she had but one idea, when the spotted head of a certain dark bay horse showed itself beyond the line of houses.

Caroline trembled, and stood on tiptoe to try to recognize the white reins and the colour of the tilbury. It was he. Roger turns the street corner, catches sight of the balcony and whips his horse; the horse darts forward to the bronze door, that he knows as well as his master knows it. The door of the apartments was opened in advance by the lady's maid, who had heard her mistress's joyful exclamation. Roger rushes to the drawing-room, presses Caroline in his arms, and kisses her with that outburst of feeling which always accompanies the meeting of two lovers who meet rarely. He leads her, or rather, though locked in each other's arms, they walk with one accord, to that charming, sequestered, and scented chamber. They sit down upon a sofa before the fire, and gaze at each other for a moment in silence, expressing their happiness by ardent pres-

sure of each other's hands and communicating their thoughts in one long look.

"Yes, it is he," she at length exclaimed, "yes, it is you. Do you know that it is three long days—a century, since I saw you. But what is the matter? has anything annoyed you?"

"My poor Caroline!"

"There now, 'my poor Caroline,' indeed!"

"No, don't laugh, my angel, we cannot go to Feydeau's this evening."

Caroline began to pout a little, but soon looked bright again.

"I am a stupid. How can I think about the theatre when I am looking at you? Is not seeing you the only spectacle I care or?" said she, passing her fingers through Roger's hair.

"I am obliged to go to the attorney-general's; we have a difficult matter on

hand. He met me in the great hall, and as I shall have to speak, he asked me to go and dine with him ; but, my darling, you can go to Feydeau's with your mother; I will join you there if the conference is soon over."

"What, go to the theatre without *you!*" cried she, with an expression of astonishment; "enjoy a pleasure which *you* do not share. O my Roger, you don't deserve to be kissed," she added, springing to his neck with a movement that was at once unaffected and voluptuous.

"Caroline, I must go back and dress myself. The Marais is some distance off, and I have still some business to get through."

"Take care, sir, what you are saying, there," said Caroline, interrupting him. "My mother told me that when men begin to talk to us about their business, they have ceased to love us."

"Caroline, have I not come to see you? Haven't I stolen this hour from my inexorable—"

"Hush," said she, placing a finger on Roger's mouth; "hush, don't you see that I am only in fun."

They had now gone back to the drawing-room. There Roger caught sight of a piece of furniture which the cabinet-maker had brought that very morning; the old rosewood frame, which had fed Caroline and her mother when they were living in the Rue du Tourniquet St. Jean, had been refurbished, and a tulle dress of rich design was already stretched upon it.

"Well, my dear friend, this evening I will work. While I embroider, I shall believe myself back again, in those old days when you used to pass me without speaking, but not without looking at me; those

days when the recollection of your looks kept me awake at night. O my dear frame, the best piece of furnitnre in my drawing-room, although it is not a gift from you: you don't know;" she said, siting down on the knees of Roger, who unable to restrain his emotions, had sunk into an armchair. "Listen to me now; I intend to give what I make by my embroidery, to the poor. You have made me rich. How I love that pretty little estate at Bellefeuille, not so much for what it is, as because you gave it me. But tell me, Roger, I should like to call myself Caroline de Bellefeuille, can I? Is it legal, or would it be winked at?"

Seeing Roger's slight gesture of assent, which was inspired by his hatred of the name of Crochard, Caroline gave a light skip and clapped her hands.

"It seems to me," she cried, "that I

shall be much more your own like that. As a rule a girl renounces her own name, and takes that of her husband." A troublesome thought, which she at once dismissed, brought the colour to her cheeks. She took Roger's hand, and led him to the open piano. "Listen," said she, "I know my sonata, like an angel, now;" and her fingers had begun to wander over the ivory keys, when she felt herself seized by the waist and borne aloft.

"Caroline, I ought to be far away from here."

"You want to go? Well then, away with you," said she, pouting; but she smiled when she looked at the timepiece, and joyously exclaimed, "At all events I shall have kept you a quarter of an hour beyond your time."

"Farewell, *Mademoiselle de Belle-*

feuille," said he, with the gentle irony of love.

She snatched a kiss, and accompanied her Roger to the door; when she had lost the sound of his footsteps on the stairs, she ran to the balcony, to watch him getting into his tilbury, and taking the reins into his hands, to catch his last look, hear the crack of his whip and the rattling of the wheels upon the pavement; to follow with her eyes the gallant horse, its master's hat, the gold lace on the groom's; and still to gaze long after the dark angle of the street had hid the vision from her sight.

Five years after the installation of Caroline de Bellefeuille, in the pretty house in the Rue Taitbout, there took place another of those domestic scenes which draw still more closely the bonds of affection between two beings who love one another.

In the middle of the blue drawing-room,

in front of the window that opened on to the balcony, a little boy, four-and-a-half years old, was making a most infernal noise, as he whipped his rocking-horse, the leg-sustaining curves of which were not moving fast enough to suit his fancy. His pretty little head, covered with light hair, that fell down upon his embroidered collar in a thousand curls, assumed an angelic smile when his mother called to him from the armchair in which she was plunged,—

"Not so much noise, Charles; you will wake your little sister."

Thereupon, the inquisitive child dismounted briskly from his horse, stole to his mother on tiptoe as if he dreaded the noise of his feet upon the carpet, placed a finger between his teeth, and, assuming one of those childish attitudes which derive their principal charm from being so entirely natural, raised the veil of white muslin

which covered the fresh face of a little girl, who was sleeping on her mother's knee.

"Eugénie is asleep then?" said he, quite astonished. "Why should she be asleep when we are awake?" he added, opening his large black liquid eyes.

"God only knows why," replied Caroline, smiling.

The mother and child gazed at the little girl, who had been baptized that very morning. Caroline, who was now twenty-four years old, was in the full bloom of that beauty which unclouded happiness and continuous enjoyment had developed. In Caroline, the woman was complete. Only too glad to fall in with the wishes of her dear Roger, she had acquired the accomplishments which she lacked. She played the piano tolerably well, and sang agreeably. She was ignorant of the usages of society, which would have rejected her,

and she would not have frequented, even if she would have been welcomed into it; for the woman who is happy does not care about society. She had not learned those drawing-room manners, nor that drawing-room style of conversation, which is so full of words and void of ideas. But by way of counterpoise, she laboriously acquired that knowledge which is indispensable to a mother whose whole ambition is to bring up her children well. Her only pleasures were to be always with her boy, to give him, from the cradle, those perpetual lessons which imbue the hearts of the young with a taste for the true and the beautiful, to preserve him from every evil influence, and to fulfil alike the troublesome functions of the nurse, and the sweet obligations of the mother.

This discreet and gentle creature had, from the very first, so cheerfully made up

her mind to keep strictly within the charmed circle in which all her happiness was bound up, that after six years of the most affectionate intimacy, she still knew her friend only by the name of Roger. The engraving of the picture of Psyche coming with her lamp to look at Cupid in spite of his prohibition, hung in Caroline's bedroom, and reminded her of the conditions of her happiness. Not once during those six years had any misplaced ambition on her part worried the heart of Roger, which was a real treasure of goodness. She never wanted dresses or diamonds; nor did her vanity induce her to accept the offer of a carriage, which was twenty times repeated. To stand on the balcony and wait for Roger, to go with him to the theatre, or in fine weather to take a walk with him through the environs of Paris, to expect him, to see him, and look for-

ward to seeing him again—such was the story of her uneventful, but love-abounding life.

While she lulled to sleep the little child of a few months old that was lying on her knee she took pleasure in recalling the memories of bygone days. She dwelt more particularly on the month of September, the period at which Roger took her to Bellefeuille to enjoy those fine days, which seem to belong to every season in turn. At that time of year nature is as prodigal of flowers as of fruit; the evenings are warm, the mornings mild, and the melancholy of autumn often gives way to the brilliance of summer. During the earlier portion of their union, Caroline had imputed the many proofs of an equable temperament and gentle disposition which Roger had given her, to the rarity of their meetings, and to their mode of

life, which precluded them from being, like husband and wife, always together. She now remembered with delight how, tormented with idle fears, she had watched him with fear and trembling during their first visit to the little estate in the Gatinais. Vain espionage of love! Each of those happy months passed like a dream, amid perpetual happiness. There was always a smile of affection upon the lips of that excellent being,—a smile that seemed like the reflection of her own. As these scenes passed too vividly before her, her eyes grew moist with tears, she thought she was not affectionate enough, and fancied she could see in the misfortune of her equivocal position, a sort of tax, levied by destiny, upon her love. And then an invincible curiosity led her to ponder over the accidents of existence, which could induce a man so affectionate

as Roger, to confine himself to a clandestine and illicit happiness. She forged a thousand romances, simply for the purpose of sparing herself the admission of the true reason, long guessed but reluctantly believed by her.

She rose, with her baby still sleeping in her arms, and went into the dining-room, to superintend the preparations for dinner.

It was the 6th of May, 1822, the anniversary of the trip to Saint-Leu which had been decisive of her destiny; so that every year, as that day came round, it was kept as a festival of the heart. Caroline selected the table-linen, and ordered the arrangement of the dessert. After gladly devoting to these details the minute attentions which fascinated Roger, she placed the little girl in her pretty cradle, went to her post on the balcony,

and soon descried the cabriolet which her friend, now arrived at full maturity, had adopted, instead of the tilbury of earlier days. After having sustained a first discharge of kisses from Caroline and the little rogue who called him papa, Roger went to the cradle, watched, for a time, the slumbers of his daughter, kissed her little forehead, then drawing from his coat pocket a long document variegated with black lines, he said,—

"Caroline, this is Mademoiselle Eugénie de Bellefeuille's portion."

The mother gratefully accepted the dotal deed, which was the title to a certain sum in the public funds.

"Why three thousand francs a year for Eugénie, while you have given Charles only fifteen hundred?"

"Charles, will be a man, my angel," replied Roger. "Fifteen hundred francs

will be enough for him. With that income a man of energy is above want. If your son should be an ordinary man, I don't wish him to have the means of committing follies. If he is ambitious, the narrowness of his means will inspire him with a taste for work. Eugénie is a woman, and must not be portionless."

The father now began to play with Charles, whose unrestrained caresses showed the independence and freedom of his bringing-up. There was no timidity on the part of the lad towards his father, to interfere with the charm which rewards the performance of the duties of paternity. The gaiety of the little family was both gentle and genuine. In the evening a magic lantern displayed upon a white cloth its illusions and mysterious pictures, to the great surprise of Charles. More than once the ecstatic joy of the innocent

little fellow, drew wild shouts of laughter from Caroline and Roger. When, later in the evening, the little boy was in bed, the little girl awoke demanding nourishment. Seated by the fire in that chamber of peace and pleasure, Roger gave himself up to the enjoyment of watching, by the light of a lamp, the soothing picture presented by the child, as it hung on Caroline's breast, and by Caroline herself, white and fresh as a new-blown lily, with her hair falling down in a thousand brown curls, and almost hiding her neck. All the charms of the young mother stood out clearly in the lamplight, which surrounded her, her dress, and the child, with manifold and picturesque effects, produced by the combination of light and shade. The calm and silent features of the young woman seemed to Roger a hundred times sweeter than they had ever been. Tender was the look

with which he gazed at the curved and coral lips which had never uttered a disagreeable word. The same thought gleamed in the eyes of Caroline, who watched Roger furtively, either to enjoy the effect she produced on him, or to forecast the future of the evening.

Her unknown friend, who understood the coquetry of that subtle look, said with affected sadness, "I must be off now; I have a stiff bit of work to finish, and am expected at home. Duty before everything; isn't that right, my darling?"

Caroline scrutinized him sadly, but at the same time softly; then with that resignation which disguises none of the sorrows of a sacrifice she, said, "Adieu, go away. If you stayed another hour, I should not be able to part with you so easily."

"My angel," answered Roger, smiling, "I have three days' leave of absence, and

am supposed to be now twenty leagues away from Paris."

One morning, a few days after this anniversary of the 6th of May, Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille, fearing she might be too late, rushed off to a house in the Rue St. Louis, in the Marais, to which she generally paid a visit once a week. A messenger had come to inform her that her mother, Madame Crochard, was sinking under a complication of sufferings, caused by her catarrh and rheumatism. While the driver of the hackney-coach, stimulated by Caroline's urgent request, backed by the promise of an ample gratuity, was lashing his horses to their utmost speed, the timorous old dames whom the Widow Crochard had gathered around her by way of society in her last days, introduced a priest into the neat and comfortable second-floor apartments, occupied

by the whilom ballet-dancer. Madame Crochard's servant did not know that the pretty girl at whose house her mistress often dined, was that mistress's own daughter; and she was one of the first to beg that a confessor might be called in, hoping that that ecclesiastic might be as serviceable to her as to her mistress. Between two games of boston or while strolling in the Turkish garden, the old women with whom the Widow Crochard gossiped every day, had succeeded in awakening in the frozen bosom of their friend, some scruples about her past life, some ideas about the future, some fears of hell, and certain hopes of pardon founded on a sincere repentance. On this solemn morning, these three old women from the Rue St. François, and the Vieille-Rue-du-Temple, had established themselves in the *salon* in which Madame Crochard enter-

tained them every Tuesday. They took it in turns to leave their armchairs, to go and sit at the head of the sick-bed to keep the poor old woman company, and buoy her up with those vain hopes with which we soothe the dying. However, when the crisis seemed to them to be close at hand, and the doctor, who had been called in on the preceding evening, gave no hopes of the widow, the three dames took counsel together, as to whether it was necessary to summon Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille. Françoise having given her opinion on the matter, it was determined that a commissionaire should go to the Rue Taitbout, and tell the news to the young relative, whose influence seemed to the four women so formidable; but they hoped that the Auvergnat's summons would not bring the young woman, who had so large a share in Madame Crochard's affection, till

all was over. The widow, who clearly had an income of a thousand crowns, would not have been so carefully nursed by that trio of females, but for the fact that none of those good friends, nor Françoise, knew of any expectant relative. The opulence of Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille, whom Madame Crochard, following the customs of the old Opera, strictly abstained from calling by the sweet name of daughter, almost justified the plot of the four women, to share among them the fortune of their dying friend.

Shortly afterwards, the particular sibyl who was keeping guard over the patient, popped her palsied head into the room in which her anxious coadjutors were sitting, and said, "It is time to send for Monsieur l'Abbé Fontanon. Two hours hence she will have neither head nor hand to write a single word."

Thereupon the toothless old servant started off and returned with a man dressed in a black coat. This priest had a vulgar face, and his contracted forehead showed a narrow mind; while his large pendant cheeks and double chin betokened selfish prosperity. His powdered hair softened the aspect of his features, until he raised his small brown prominent eyes, which would not have seemed out of place beneath the eye-brows of a Tartar.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," said Françoise, "I thank you for your advice; but you may be sure that I have taken the utmost care of the dear woman."

The servant, she of the lagging foot and mourning face, was silent when she saw that the door of the apartments was open, and that the most insinuating of the three dowagers had stationed herself upon the landing, in order to be the first to speak to the confessor.

After the clergyman had endured with complaisance a triple broadside of honied and sanctimonious talk from the friends of the widow, he took a seat by Madame Crochard's pillow. Common decency and a certain sense of shame, compelled the three dames and old Françoise to remain in the *salon*, where they assumed for each other's benefit, airs of grief such as only those wrinkled faces could produce in such perfection.

"Ah, isn't it sad?" cried Françoise. "This is the fourth mistress, now, that I shall have the pain of burying. The first left me an annuity of a hundred francs; the second fifty crowns, and the third a thousand crowns. After thirty years in service, that is all I possess." Thereupon the servant exercised her privilege of coming and going, to ensconce herself in a little closet, where she could overhear what the priest said.

"It gives me pleasure," Fontanon was

saying, "to find that you have such pious sentiments, my daughter; you have upon you a sacred relic . . . ."

Madame Crochard made a vague movement, which seemed to indicate that her mind was wandering, for she pointed to the imperial cross of the Legion of Honour. The priest when he caught sight of the Emperor's head started back one step, but, immediately afterwards, again drew near to his penitent, who held some conversation with him in so low a tone that for some moments Françoise heard nothing.

"A curse upon me!" suddenly ejaculated the old woman, "don't forsake me. What, Monsieur l'Abbé, you believe that I shall have to answer for my daughter's soul?"

The priest replied in too low a tone, and the partition was too thick, for Françoise to hear his answer.

"Alas," cried the widow, shedding tears,

"the wretch has left me nothing of which I can dispose. When he took my poor Caroline, he separated us, and only gave me a life annuity of 3000 francs, the capital of which belongs to my daughter."

"Madame has a daughter, and has only an annuity," cried Françoise, rushing into the *salon*.

The three old women looked at each other in profound amazement. One of them, whose nose and chin almost joined each other, and seemed thereby to confer upon her the palm of hypocrisy and cunning, winked, and so soon as Françoise's back was turned, made a sign to her two friends, as much as to say, "She is a knowing creature; she has already had three legacies."

So the three old women made up their minds to stay. But the clergyman soon reappeared, and when he had said one word to them, the witches hobbled down the

stairs together after him, leaving Françoise alone with her mistress. It was all very well for Madame Crochard, whose sufferings were becoming more and more intense, to ring for her servant now; Françoise contented herself with calling out "Coming, coming directly."

Cupboard-doors and wardrobe-doors were opening and shutting, as if Françoise were looking for some lottery-ticket that had been mislaid. Just as this crisis was at its climax, Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille reached her mother's bedside, to lavish on her sweet words of comfort.

"Oh, my poor mother, what a criminal I am! you are in pain, and I knew nothing of it; my heart did not tell it me. But here I am. . . ."

"Caroline."

"What, mother?"

"They brought a priest to me."

"They should have fetched a doctor," said Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille. "A doctor, Françoise! How is it that these women did not send for a doctor?"

"They brought me a priest," continued the old woman with a sigh.

"How she suffers! and no sedative—nothing, on the table!"

The mother made a vague sign, which Caroline's penetrating eye understood, for she kept silence, that her mother might speak.

"They brought me a priest—under pretence of getting me to confess. Caroline, beware," groaned the whilom ballet-girl, making a final effort; "the priest extracted from me the name of your benefactor."

"But who could have told it you, my poor mother?"

In the attempt to assume a knowing look, the old woman died. If Mademoiselle

de Bellefeuille could have observed her mother's face she would have seen what no one will ever see—Death smiling.

In order to understand the interest which underlies the introduction to this scene, we must for a moment forget the actors in it, and listen to the recital of certain anterior events, the last of which is closely connected with the death of Madame Crochard. The two parts will then form one story, which, in obedience to a law peculiar to life in Paris, divides itself into two distinct series of events.

Towards the end of November, 1805, a young advocate, about twenty-six years of age, was descending, at about three o'clock a.m., the grand staircase of the hotel inhabited by the arch-chancellor of the empire. When he reached the court, dressed as he was in ball-room attire, a fine sleet was falling. He could not restrain an expression

of disgust—not, however, entirely devoid of that gaiety which rarely forsakes a Frenchman,—when, on peering through the railings of the hotel, he could neither discover any hackney-coach nor hear the sound of horses' hoofs, or the hoarse voices of the Parisian hackney-coachmen. The silence was broken only by the impatient feet of the horses of the grand judge (whom the young man had left at the card-table of M. Cambacérès) as they pawed the pavement of the court of the hotel which was dimly lighted by the carriage-lamps.

All at once the young man received a friendly slap on the shoulder, and turning round recognized and saluted the grand judge, who just as his footman was letting down the carriage-steps, guessed the young man's difficulty.

"In the night all cats are grey," said he gaily. "The grand judge will not com-

promise himself if he gives a lift to an advocate—especially when that advocate is the nephew of an old colleague who was one of the luminaries of the grand State Council which gave the Code Napoléon to France." At a gesture of the supreme chief of the imperial judges, the pedestrian stepped into the carriage.

"Where do you live?" inquired the minister of the advocate, before the footman, who was waiting for directions, closed the door.

"Quai des Augustins, monseigneur." The horses started off and the young man found himself alone with the minister, whom both before and after Cambacérès' sumptuous dinner, he had endeavoured to accost, but in vain; for the grand judge had visibly avoided him throughout the evening.

"Well, Monsieur *de* Granville you are in a fair road—"

"So long as I am by the side of your Excellency."

"I am not joking," said the minister. "You were admitted to the bar two years ago, and your conduct of the defence in the Simeuse and D'Hauteserre affair has given you a high position."

"I thought until now, that my devotion to those unfortunate *émigrés* had done me harm."

"You are very young," said the minister gravely; then after a pause he continued, "you created a very favourable impression on the High Chancellor this evening. Join the magistracy of the *parquet;* we are in want of men. The nephew of a man in whom Cambacérès and I take so lively an interest must not remain an advocate for want of patronage. Your uncle helped us to weather some very stormy times, and such services as those are not to be forgotten."

Here the minister paused for a moment.

"In a short time," continued he, "I shall have three places vacant at the tribunal of first instance, and at the court imperial of Paris; come and see me then, and choose whichever of them you prefer. Till then work on, but don't present yourself at my audiences; for, in the first place, I am overwhelmed with business; and in the second, your competitors might guess your object, and injure you in the eyes of the Emperor. Cambacérès and I, in not speaking to you this evening, have saved you from the perils which beset a favourite."

As the minister concluded, the carriage stopped at the Quai des Augustins; the young advocate thanked his generous protector with great emotion for the *two* seats which he had given him, and began to thunder at his door; for the north-east wind was whistling about the calves of his

legs with great severity. The bolt of the door was at length withdrawn by the old porter. As the advocate passed the lodge, the porter called to him in a hoarse voice, "Monsieur Granville, there is a letter for you." The young man took it, and, in spite of the cold, tried to read the address by the feeble light of a lamp, whose wick was well-nigh burnt out. "It is from my father," said he, taking his candle, which the porter had at last succeeded in lighting. Then he went quickly up to his apartments, and read the following letter :—

"Take the express, and if you can get here quickly, your fortune is made. Mademoiselle Angélique Bontems has lost her sister; so she is now an only daughter, and we know she does not hate you. Now, Madame Bontems has it in her power to leave her nearly 40,000 francs a year, besides

the marriage portion which she will give her. I have smoothed the way. Our friends will be astonished to see members of the old nobility intermarrying with the Bontems family. Bontems, the father, a red republican of the deepest dye, picked up a number of the national estates at a very cheap price. But, in the first place, it was church property, and will therefore never be restored; secondly, since you have already stooped to the position of an advocate, I do not see why we should recoil from another concession to existing ideas. The girl will have 300,000 francs; I will give you 100,000; your mother's property must be worth 150,000 crowns, or thereabouts. Thus, then, my dear son, I see you in a position, if you choose to join the magistracy, to become a senator, just like any one else. My brother-in-law, the Councillor of State, will not give you a helping hand towards

that, of course; but, as he is a bachelor, his fortune will come to you some day, so that if you should not get a senatorship upon your own merits, you will succeed to his. Then you will be perched high enough to see how events are likely to turn out. Adieu. I embrace you."

Thus, then, young De Granville went to bed, framing a thousand projects, each brighter than the last. Under the powerful patronage of the Grand Judge, and of his maternal uncle, one of the compilers of the code, he was about to make a start in an enviable position in the first court in the empire, and would be a member of that *parquet* whence Napoléon selected the chief functionaries of his empire. Then, ready to his hand, there presented itself a fortune large enough to help him to maintain his rank, as he could not have done on his meagre income of 5000 francs,

derived from an estate which had once formed part of his mother's property. That happiness might be added to his ambitious dreams, he conjured up the artless face of Mademoiselle Angélique Bontems, the playmate of his childhood. So long as he had not arrived at years of discretion, his father and mother had not opposed his intimacy with the pretty daughter of their country neighbour; but when, during the brief visits which his vacations enabled him to pay to Bayeux, his parents, who were bigots in the matter of nobility, perceived his liking for the young girl, they forbade him to think about her. So that during the last ten years Granville had only been able to catch momentary glimpses of her whom he used to call his *little wife*. During these moments, stolen from the active surveillance of their families, they had been barely able

to exchange a few vague words in passing each other at church or in the street. Their happiest days were those when they were brought together by one of those rural fêtes which in Normandy are called *assemblies*, and looked at one another furtively and from afar. During his last holiday Granville had seen Angélique twice; and the downcast look and melancholy attitude of his *little wife* led him to believe that she was being subjected to some secret tyranny.

By seven o'clock the next morning the young advocate was at the coach-office in the Rue Notre-Dame-des-Victoires, and was lucky enough to find room in the vehicle which started for Caen at that hour.

Deep was the emotion with which the sucking advocate caught sight once more of the steeples of Bayeux cathedral. As yet, none of his aspirations had been de-

feated, so that his heart expanded under the influence of the beautiful feelings which animate the young. After the protracted congratulatory banquet prepared for him by his father and some of his friends, was over, the impatient youth was conducted to a certain house situated in the Rue Teinture, and well known to him. His heart beat violently as his father—who at Bayeux was still called as Comte de Granville—knocked so loudly at the carriage-gates, that the green paint fell from them in scales. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. A young maid-servant, with a white cotton cap upon her head, greeted the two gentlemen with a little courtesy, and told them, in answer to their inquiries, that the two ladies would soon be back from vespers. The count and his son entered a low-pitched hall, which was used as a drawing-room, and

looked like a convent parlour. A ceiling of polished walnut-wood gave a gloomy aspect to the room, round which some tapestry—covered chairs, and antique armchairs were symmetrically ranged. The only ornament of the stone chimney-piece was a mirror of greenish glass, from either side of which projected the tortuous branches of a pair of those old candelabra such as were manufactured at the epoch of the Peace of Utrecht. Against the wainscot, and opposite to the chimney-piece, young Granville noticed an enormous crucifix of ebony and ivory, surrounded by consecrated box-wood. Although the room had three windows, looking into a country garden, whose symmetrical squares were bordered with long lines of box, so little daylight entered the room, that it was difficult to distinguish three ecclesiastical pictures, which were the work of some skilful brush, and had doubtless

been purchased, during the Revolution, by old Bontems, who, in his capacity of leader of the district, never forgot his own interests. From the carefully polished floor, to the curtains, with their square green pattern, everything shone with a monastic neatness. The heart of the young man involuntarily shrank within him, in that still retreat, which formed the home of Angélique. His continual habit of frequenting the brilliant drawing-rooms of Paris, and the vortex of gaiety in which he lived, had readily effaced from the memory of Granville the sombre and peaceful life, led by the denizens of the provinces. The contrast was so sudden, that it caused him an internal shudder. To quit one of the assemblies of Cambacérès, where existence was on so grand a scale, where large-minded men abounded, and where the glory of the emperor was

reflected, and fall suddenly into a circle of petty ideas, was like being transported from Italy to Greenland. "To live here, is not to live at all," he said to himself, as he looked at the methodistical *salon*. The old count, who observed his son's astonishment, led him to a window, through which a little daylight was struggling, and while the servant lighted the old wax candles, tried to dissipate the clouds which the aspect of the room had piled on Granville's brow.

"Listen to me, my boy," said the count; "old Bontems' widow is furiously sanctimonious. When the devil grew old—you know the saying. I see that the aspect of the room rather sets your teeth on edge. Well, the truth is this. The old woman is besieged by the priests; they have persuaded her that it is never too late to win heaven; and to make sure of St. Peter and

his keys, she buys them. She goes to mass every day, hears all the services, communicates every Sunday that God gives us, and amuses herself by restoring chapels. She has presented to the cathedral so many ornaments, aubes, and copes, she has covered the dais with so many plumes, that, at the procession of the last Fête-Dieu, there was as great a crowd to see the magnificent dresses of the priests, and the newly-gilded cups and plates, as there ever was at an execution. So that this house is a regular Holy Land. It was I who prevented the old madwoman from presenting these three pictures to the church; look you, a Dominichino, a Correggio, and an André del Sarto, which are worth a lot of money."

"But about Angélique?" said the young man sharply.

"If you don't marry her, Angélique is lost," said the count. "Our good apostles

have advised her to live and die a virgin and a martyr. It took me an infinite amount of trouble to rouse her little heart by talking about you; that was as soon as I saw that she was an only daughter. But you see at a glance that, as soon as you are married, you will carry her off to Paris. There, what with marriage, dissipation, theatres, and the torrent of Parisian life, she will soon forget confessionals, fasts, hair shirts, and masses, which are meat and drink to these creatures."

"But won't the 50,000 francs per annum, the spoils of the Church, go back to the . . . ?"

"There we are!" said the count, with a look of subtlety. "In consideration of the marriage—for the vanity of Madame Bontems was not a little tickled at the notion of engrafting the Bontems on the genealogical tree of the Granvilles—the aforesaid mother gives the *corpus* of

her fortune to her daughter, reserving to herself only a life interest. You will have the prettiest girl in Bayeux, a little gossip who will cause you no anxiety, because she will be a woman of principle. She has been *mortified*, as they term it in their jargon, by prayer and fasting, and," added the count in a low voice, "by her mother."

A gentle rap at the door stopped the flow of the count's eloquence; for he thought he saw the two ladies coming in. But it was a busy-looking little page who entered. Overawed at the sight of the two gentlemen, he beckoned to the maid-servant, who went up to him. The lad wore a waistcoat of blue cloth with little flaps which hung about his thighs, and blue and white striped trowsers; his hair was cropped all round; his face looked like that of a chorister; so strongly

did it savour of that forced sanctimoniousness which all the inhabitants of a methodistical household acquire.

"Mademoiselle Gatienne, do you know where the books for the Service of the Virgin are? The ladies of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart are going to have a procession in the church this evening."

Gatienne went to look for the books.

"Will it last much longer, my little militia man?" asked the count.

"Oh, half an hour, sir, at the utmost."

"Let us go and look at it, there are some pretty women to be seen," said the father to the son. "Besides, a visit to the cathedral can't do us any harm."

The young advocate followed his father with an air of irresolution.

"What is the matter?" said the count.

"The matter is, father,—the matter is, —that I am right."

"Right? Why you have said nothing yet."

"True, but it has occurred to me that you have saved 10,000 francs a year from the wreck of your former fortune; you will leave them to me at as distant a date as possible, I hope. But if you give me 100,000 francs to make a stupid marriage, you will allow me to ask you for 50,000 of them to avert a calamity, and enjoy, while preserving my bachelorhood, a fortune equal to that which your Demoiselle Bontems would bring me."

"Are you mad?"

"No, father. The fact is this. The grand judge promised me on the day before yesterday a place in the *parquet* of Paris. Now 50,000 francs added to what I have, and to the salary attached to my

office, will yield me an income of 12,000. I shall then, assuredly, have opportunities for making my fortune, a thousand times preferable to those afforded by a marriage as bankrupt in happiness as it is rich in money."

"It is easy to see," said the father, smiling, "that *you* didn't live under the old régime; are we men ever shackled by having a wife, think you?"

"But, father, in the present age marriage has become . . . "

"Ah, then," said the count, interrupting his son, "all that my old companions in emigration tell me, is really true? The Revolution has bequeathed to us manners void of gaiety, and infected our young men with equivocal principles? You are going just like my Jacobin brother-in-law, to preach to me about the nation, public morality, and disinterestedness. O my God, but for the

emperor's sisters, what *would* become of us?"

They were under the roof of the cathedral as these last words fell from the lips of the still lusty old man, who was always called by the peasants on his estate, "Le Seigneur de Granville." Heedless of the sanctity of the spot he hummed as he dipped his fingers into the holy water, an air from the opera, "Rose et Colas;" and while conducting his son along the side aisles of the nave, he stopped at each pillar to take a look at the body of the church, with its rows of heads ranged in line, like soldiers on parade. The appropriate service of the Sacred Heart was on the point of beginning. The ladies belonging to that society being placed near the choir, the count and his son made their way to that part of the nave, and stood with their backs against one of the darkest

pillars, whence they could perceive the entire group of heads, which had the appearance of a prairie enamelled with flowers. Suddenly, from a spot not more than two paces from young Granville, a voice which seemed too sweet to belong to a human being, rang out clear as the notes of the first nightingale that sings to welcome the return of spring. Though accompanied by a thousand female voices and the organ, this voice acted on the nerves as if they had been attacked by the over-rich and vivid tones of the harmonica. The Parisian turned round and saw a young woman, whose face was, in consequence of the bending of the head, completely buried beneath a large hat of white material. He came to the conclusion that it could only be from her that this clear melody proceeded. He fancied he recognized Angélique, in spite of the pelisse of brown merino

in which the girl was wrapped, and he nudged his father's arm.

"Yes, it is she," said the count, after looking in the direction indicated by his son. The old seigneur pointed to the pale face of an old woman, whose eyes, deeply bordered with dark circles, had already descried the strangers, though her deceptive glance had not appeared to quit the prayer-book in her hand. Angélique looked up towards the altar, as if to inhale the penetrating perfumes of the incense, whose clouds floated to the spot where the two women were stationed. Then by the weird mysterious light spread through the vast and sombre building by the tapers which were burning on the altar, by the lamp that depended from the centre of the nave and by sundry wax candles that were fixed against the pillars of the cathedral, the youthful advocate caught sight of a coun-

tenance which completely overthrew his resolutions.

Under a white mohair hat he saw a set of features of wonderful regularity, to which the black satin strings of the hat, meeting in a bow beneath the dimpled chin, formed a perfect oval frame. Hair of a pale gold colour was parted into two bands, over a narrow but pretty little forehead, and fell upon the cheeks like the shadow of foliage upon a tuft of flowers. The two eyebrows were traced with that regularity which one admires in beautiful Chinese faces. There was a rare firmness in the outlines of the almost aquiline nose, and the two lips resembled two rosy lines traced *con amore* by a delicate hand. In the expression of the pale blue eyes there was much candour. If Granville observed in this face a sort of taciturn rigidity, he might well ascribe it to the devotional feelings, by which Angélique was at that

moment inspired. The sacred words of prayer passed through two rows of pearls, and the cold air condensed the breath into a cloud, as it were, of incense. The young man could not resist the temptation to lean forward and inhale the divine breath. This movement attracted the attention of the young girl, and the steady gaze which had been fixed upon the altar was now turned upon Granville, in whom, though the dim light prevented her from seeing him distinctly, she recognized the companion of her childhood. A souvenir more powerful than the spirit of prayer gave an unnatural brightness to her face; she blushed. The advocate, trembled with joy at beholding the hopes of the life to come vanquished by the hopes of love; the glory of the sanctuary eclipsed by the memories of earth. But his triumph was of brief duration. Angélique dropped her veil over her face, assumed a calm appearance, and resumed

her singing, without betraying in her voice the slightest emotion. Meanwhile he found himself under the influence of a single desire, and all his prudential ideas vanished. When the service was over, his impatience had become so great, that instead of allowing the two ladies to go home alone, he went straight up to his *little wife* and accosted her. A recognition, timid on both sides, took place beneath the church porch, in the presence of the faithful. Madame Bontems trembled with pride as she took the arm of the Comte de Granville, who, being compelled to offer it in the presence of so many persons, bore his son no good will for his indecent impetuosity.

During the fortnight which elapsed between the official presentation of the young Vicomte de Granville as the intended husband of Mademoiselle Bontems and the day fixed for the solemn ceremony, he assiduously paid his respects to Angélique

in the sombre parlour, and grew accustomed to it. The object of his long visits was to study the disposition of Angélique, for his prudence had luckily been re-aroused on the morrow of their first interview. He always found his future wife seated before a little table of Saint Lucia wood, employed in marking the linen of her trousseau. Angélique never introduced the subject of religion. If the young advocate began to toy with the rich rosary which was kept in a small green velvet bag, or smiled at the relic which always accompanies that implement of devotion, Angélique with a beseeching look, would gently take the rosary from his hands, and, without saying a single word, replace it in the bag, and put it away. If Granville in a spirit of mischief sometimes ventured to declaim against certain religious practices, the pretty Normandy girl listened and en-

countered him with a smile of conviction, "You must believe nothing, or believe all that the Church teaches," was her reply. "Would you like to have an irreligious girl for the mother of your children? No. Where is the man who would dare to judge between God and unbelievers? Well, then, how can I find fault with that which the Church receives?" Angélique seemed to be inspired with such pathetic charity, the young advocate observed such touching looks directed to himself, that he was sometimes tempted to embrace the religious views of his intended bride. Her profound belief that she was walking in the right path, awakened in the heart of the aspirant to the magistracy, doubts, by which he endeavoured to profit. Granville now committed the enormous blunder of mistaking the charm of desire for that of love. Angélique was so glad to

reconcile the dictates of the heart, with the dictates of duty, by yielding to an attachment formed in early childhood, that the deluded advocate could not discover which of the two voices was the stronger. Are not all young men disposed to rely upon the promises of a pretty face, to infer that where there is beauty of feature, there is beauty of heart? An indefinable feeling impels them to believe that moral and physical perfection always accompany each other. If religion had forbidden Angélique to allow free play to her feelings, they would have withered in her bosom as quickly as a plant would wither, if sprinkled with some deadly acid. Could a man who loved and was beloved discover the existence of such well-concealed fanaticism?

Such is the history of young Granville, during this fortnight which he galloped through, as we gallop through a book,

when we want to know how it ends. Angélique, when carefully studied, seemed to be the gentlest of women; he experienced, to his surprise, a feeling of gratitude to Madame Bontems, who, by imbuing her daughter so strongly with religious sentiments, had in some sort prepared her for life's cares and troubles.

On the day appointed for the signing of the fatal contract, Madame Bontems extorted from her son-in-law a solemn oath that he would not interfere with the religious practices of her daughter, that he would give her entire liberty of conscience, would allow her to communicate, to go to church, and to confession, as often as she felt inclined, and would never thwart her in the choice of a confessor. At that solemn moment, Angélique looked at her future husband with an air of such ardour and purity, that he did not hesitate to

take the required oath. A faint smile played on the lips of the Abbé Fontanon, the spiritual director of the household. Mademoiselle Bontems, by a slight movement of the head, promised her friend not to abuse the liberty accorded. As for the old count, he simply hummed in an undertone, the air, "*Va-t'en voir s'ils viennent.*"

After some days spent over the *retours de noces*, which figure so conspicuously in provincial life, Granville and his wife returned to Paris. There the young advocate received the nomination to the post of advocate-general to the Imperial Court of the Seine. In looking about for a dwelling, Angélique, using the influence which all women possess during the honeymoon, prevailed upon Granville to take a spacious set of rooms on the ground floor of an hotel situated at the corner of the Vieille-Rue-du-Temple and the Rue Neuve

Saint-François. Now the principal motive of this choice was that the house was close to the Rue d'Orléans, in which there was a church, and within a short distance of a little chapel in the Rue Saint-Louis.

"It is the duty of a good housekeeper to lay in a good stock of provisions," was her husband's laughing remark. Angélique, with great justice, pointed out to him that the district of the Marais lies near to the Palais de Justice, and that the magistrates whom they had just been visiting, lived in that district. Attached to the house there was a large garden which to a young couple enhanced the value of the position; their children, *if heaven should send them any*, might run about in the garden. The court of the hotel was spacious, and the stabling was good. The advocate-general wanted to live in an hotel in the Chaussée-d'Antin, where all

is fresh and lively, where the fashions are to be seen in all their novelty, and whence the boulevards, strewn with people of fashion, the theatres, and places of amusement, are more easily accessible. But he was forced to give way to the coaxing of the young wife, who was asking her first favour; and thus, in order to please her, he buried himself in the Marais. As Granville's duties were new to him, he was obliged to devote a very large amount of time to them; so his first care was to furnish a study, and set up his library. He hastened to install himself in a room that was soon encumbered with briefs, and left his young wife to supervise the fitting up of the other apartments. He was all the more ready to involve Angélique in the bustle of making the first household purchases which give rise to so many pleasures and memories, in the hearts of

young wives, because he was ashamed of paying his bride less attention than the laws of the honeymoon ordain. As soon as he was familiarized with his work, the advocate-general allowed his wife to drag him from his study, and show him the general effect of the furnishing and decoration, which he had as yet seen only in detail. If there be any truth in the adage, that one may form an estimate of a woman's character from the appearance of her house-door, her rooms should be a still more faithful index to her mind. Whether or not, Angélique had inscribed her own character upon a world of things, of which she had had the ordering, the young magistrate was surprised at the stiffness and chill solemnity which reigned throughout his rooms; he sought in vain for grace and harmony; there was nothing to rejoice the sight. The spirit of

rectitude and politeness which was stamped upon the parlour at Bayeux, was here repeated. It breathed from the large round hollow ceiling, adorned with those arabesques, whose long curling lines are in such execrable taste. In his desire to exculpate his wife, the young man retraced his steps and renewed his examination of the long and lofty anteroom, which served as a vestibule to the other rooms. The colour which his wife had ordered the painter to lay upon the wainscot, was too gloomy, and the dark-green velvet with which the seats were covered, added to the sombre aspect of this apartment, which, however unimportant, always gives an idea of the whole house, just as a man's intellect is judged of from his opening phrases. An anteroom is a kind of preface, which should announce everything, but promise nothing. The young magistrate asked

himself whether it were possible that his wife would have selected the lamp in the antique case, which hung in the centre of that bare hall, with its pavements of black and white marble, and its paper representing a stone wall, with here and there a line of green moss. A highly ornamented but old-fashioned barometer hung in the middle of one of the walls, as if to make its nakedness more conspicuous. When all this met his eye, the young man looked at his wife, and saw that she was so well satisfied with the red fringe of the muslin curtains, with the barometer, and the decorous statue which adorned the large gothic stove, that he lacked the barbarous courage to destroy such strong illusions. Instead of condemning his wife, he condemned himself; he accused himself of having neglected his first duty, the duty which summoned him to guide the first

steps in Paris, of a young girl brought up at Bayeux. From this specimen, every one may judge of the manner in which the other rooms were decorated. What could be expected from a young woman who took fright at the naked legs of a caryatid, who keenly repulsed a candelabrum, a candlestick, or a piece of furniture, if it were ornamented with an Egyptian torso in a state of nudity? At that epoch the school of the painter David, was just reaching the apogee of its glory. Everything throughout the length and breadth of France felt the influence of the accuracy of his drawing, and of his love for the antique, which made his painting a sort of coloured sculpture. Not one of the creations of the luxury of the empire gained the rights of citizenship with Madame de Granville. The vast square *salon* of her dwelling retained the faded white and gold

with which it was decorated in the days of Louis Quinze, the lozenge-shaped gratings and intolerable festoons due to the sterile fecundity of the painters of that period. If there had only been harmony of detail, if modern mahogany had assumed the tortured shapes brought into fashion by the corrupt taste of Boucher, Angélique's home would simply have afforded the amusing contrast of a pair of young folks living in the nineteenth century, as if they had belonged to the eighteenth; but a crowd of things in it, produced ridiculous antitheses. Consoles, timepieces, and flambeaus, all were redolent of those warlike attributes which imperial victories rendered so dear to Paris. The Greek helmets, the Roman cross-swords, and the bucklers, due to military enthusiasm, which at that period were employed in the decoration of the most peaceful

articles of furniture, did not exactly harmonize with the delicate and labyrinthine arabesques, in which Madame de Pompadour delighted. Sanctimoniousness induces a certain wearisome humility, which by no means excludes pride. Either through modesty or from inclination, Madame de Granville seemed to have a horror of soft, light colours; perhaps also she thought that purple and brown were suitable to the dignity of a magistrate. But how should a young girl, accustomed to a life of austerity, have had any notion of those voluptuous couches which inspire naughty ideas, those elegant, perfidious boudoirs, in which sin is rough-sketched? The poor magistrate was quite disheartened. The tone of approbation in which he endorsed the praises which his wife bestowed upon herself, showed her that he was not pleased with anything. Thereupon she

exhibited so much chagrin that the loving Granville took her profound regret to be a proof of love, not a manifestation of wounded self-esteem. How could a young girl, suddenly snatched away from commonplace country notions, and ignorant of the vanities and refinement of Parisian life, do better? The magistrate preferred to believe that his wife had been controlled in her choice by the contractor, rather than admit the truth; if he had not been so much in love, he would have felt that the shopkeepers, so quick in detecting the wishes of their customers, so far from controlling his wife's taste, had thanked heaven for sending them a tasteless little Puritan, to help them to get rid of their old-fashioned stock. He therefore began to console his pretty Normandy bride.

"Happiness, my dear Angélique, does not depend on the greater or less elegance

of a piece of furniture, but on the gentleness, complaisance, and affection of a wife."

"But it is my *duty* to love you, and never will the accomplishment of a duty give me so much pleasure," said Angélique gently. Nature has endowed women with so great a desire to please and to be loved, that even in the case of a young Puritan, ideas about a future state and eternal salvation must give way to the first delights of matrimony. Accordingly, from the month of April, when their marriage took place, until the beginning of winter, the husband and wife lived together in perfect harmony. Love and labour have the merit of rendering a man tolerably indifferent to mere externals. Granville, being obliged to pass half the day at the Palais de Justice, and to debate weighty matters involving the lives and the fortunes of men, was less able

than another to notice certain home affairs. If on Friday there was nothing but fish for dinner, and he asked in vain for a dish of meat, his wife, whom the Gospel prohibited from lying, nevertheless contrived, by means of little tricks permitted in the interests of religion, to ascribe to her own heedlessness or the emptiness of the markets what was really premeditated; she would often justify herself at the expense of the cook, and sometimes went so far as to scold him. At that epoch, young magistrates did not, as in these times, observe fast days, ember week, and the eves of saints' days; so that Granville did not at first notice the periodicity of the Lenten dinners; especially as his wife, with perfidious care rendered them very appetizing by means of teal, moor-hens, patties, or fish, whose amphibious flesh or the seasoning deceived the taste. Thus the magistrate,

without being aware of it, lived very orthodoxly, and secured his salvation incognito. On weekdays he did not know whether his wife went to mass or not, but on Sundays, with very natural complaisance, he accompanied her to church to make up, as it were, for her occasionally sacrificing vespers on his account. Thus he could not at first discover the rigour of his wife's religious practices. Places of amusement being insupportable in summer-time on account of the heat, Granville was even deprived of the pretext of a successful hit for taking his wife to the play; so that the serious question of the theatre was not raised. In short, during the first days of a marriage to which the beauty of the young girl has formed the principal inducement 'tis very difficult for a man to be exacting in the matter of amusements. Youth is gluttonous rather than dainty, and moreover

mere possession is itself a charm. How can a man recognize coldness, dignity, or reserve on the part of a woman, when he endows her with his own enthusiasm, when the flame which inspires him is reflected in her? A man must reach a certain stage of conjugal tranquillity in order to discern that a Puritan waits for love with folded arms.

Granville, therefore, believed himself happy enough, until the occurrence of a fatal event, which arose to influence his married life. In the month of November, 1808, the canon of Bayeux Cathedral, who formerly directed the consciences of Madame Bontems and her daughter, came to Paris, attracted thither by an ambition to obtain a cure of souls in the capital, a post which he probably coveted as a stepping-stone to a bishopric. On resuming his old dominion over his sheep, he shud-

dered to find her already so much changed by the air of Paris, and longed to bring her back into his frigid fold. The ex-canon, a man of about thirty-eight, introduced into the midst of the Parisian clergy—a body so tolerant and enlightened—the harsh provincial asceticism and inflexible bigotry, whose multiplied exigencies are so many bonds for timorous souls. Madame de Granville repented and returned to her Jansenism. It would be tedious to recount with exactitude the incidents which gradually and imperceptibly introduced unhappiness into the bosom of this household; it will perhaps be sufficient to relate the principle facts, without attempting to arrange them in strict chronological order. The first misunderstanding however, between this young couple, was striking enough. Madame Granville did not refuse to accompany her husband to grave re-

unions, dinner-parties, concerts, or to the assemblies of magistrates, placed above her husband in the judicial hierarchy; but she contrived for some time to feign a headache whenever it was a question of going to a ball. One day Granville, weary of these pretended illnesses, destroyed the note of invitation to a ball at the house of one of the Councillors of State, and surprising his wife with a verbal invitation one evening when there was not the least suspicion of ill-health, he produced her in the midst of a wonderful fête.

The dejected look which his wife wore on their return home offended Granville, and he said to her, "My dear, your position as a wife, the rank which you hold in the world, and the fortune which you enjoy, impose upon you certain obligations which no divine law can abrogate. Are you not the glory of your husband? You ought

therefore to go with me to balls, and appear there in proper trim."

"Why, my friend, what was there so much amiss about my toilette?"

"I am not speaking of your dress, but of your manner, my dear. When a young man comes up and addresses you, you grow so serious that a wag might conclude your virtue extremely fragile. You seem to fear that a smile might compromise you. You really looked this evening, as if you were invoking God's forgiveness for the sins that were being committed all round you. The world, my dear angel, is not a convent. But since you *have* mentioned your toilette, I will confess to you that it is also your duty to follow the fashions and customs of the world."

"Would you then have me display my figure like those brazen-faced women who wear such low dresses that unchaste eyes can see their naked shoulders? . . ."

"There is a difference, my dear," said the substitute, "between exposing the whole breast, and dressing the upper part of the body gracefully; you have a triple row of tulle-ruches which envelope you from neck to chin. It looks as if you had besought your dressmaker to deprive your shoulders and the outlines of your bosom, of all grace, as earnestly as a coquette entreats hers so to make her dresses as to bring out all the secrets of her figure. Your bosom is buried beneath folds so numerous, that everybody was laughing at your affectation of coyness. I should cause you pain were I to repeat the absurd things that were said about you."

"Those who are pleased with such obscenities will not have to bear the burthen of our sins," answered the young wife drily.

"You didn't dance, did you?" asked Granville.

"I will never dance," she replied.

"What if I tell you that you ought to dance," resumed the magistrate sharply; "yes, you ought to follow the fashion, put flowers in your hair, and wear diamonds. Consider, my dear, that rich people, and we *are* rich, are obliged to support luxury in the state. Is it not better to encourage manufactures than to scatter one's money about in almsgiving, through the hands of the clergy?"

"You speak as a statesman," said Angélique.

"And you as a priest," retorted Granville sharply.

The discussion grew very bitter. Madame Granville in her replies, which were always gentle, and uttered in a voice that was as clear as a church-bell, exhibited an obstinacy that betrayed the influence of the priest. When, in claiming the rights which

Granville's promise had given her, she said that her confessor had specially forbidden her to go to balls, the magistrate tried to prove to her that the priest exceeded the requirements of the Church. This odious theological dispute was renewed with much more violence and acrimony on both sides, when Granville wanted to take his wife to the play. At length the magistrate, with the sole object of overcoming the pernicious influence exercised over his wife, by the ex-canon, placed the quarrel on such a footing that Madame de Granville accepted her husband's challenge, to write to the Court of Rome for information as to whether a woman could, without imperilling her immortal soul, wear low dresses, and go to balls and theatres, to please her husband. The response of the venerable Pius VII. was not long delayed. It boldly condemned the resistance of the wife, and censured the

confessor. The letter, which was a regular catechism of matrimony, seemed, as it were, dictated by the gentle voice of Fénelon, breathing throughout his elegance and mildness. "A woman is well placed wherever she goes with her husband." "If she commits sin by his order, she will not one day have to answer for it."

These two passages of the pope's homily led Madame de Granville and her confessor to accuse the holy father of irreligion. But before the brief arrived, the substitute noticed the strict observance of *maigre* days imposed upon him by his wife, and ordered his servants to serve meat throughout the year. Notwithstanding the displeasure which this order caused his wife, Granville, who cared little or nothing for feasts or fasts, adhered to it with manly firmness.

The weakest creature that can think, is

wounded in its tenderest point when performing at the instigation of a will other than its own, something which it would have done of its own accord. Of all tyrannies that is the most odious which perpetually robs the heart of the merit of its thoughts and actions. It is abdication without having reigned. The word which it would have been most sweet to utter, the sentiment which it would have been most sweet to express, when we believe them to be commanded, die upon the lips. The young magistrate soon gave up receiving his friends, and ceased to entertain them. His house seemed to be in mourning. A house whose mistress is a Puritan has an aspect peculiar to itself. The servants, who are constantly subjected to the surveillance of the wife, are chosen from among the class of so-called pious persons who have faces which are *sui generis*. Just as the most

jovial lad who joins the police force will acquire the look of a policeman; even so, people who adopt Puritan habits contract a uniform cast of countenance. The habit of looking upon the ground, of maintaining an attitude of compunction, invests them with a livery of hypocrisy, which rogues can don with marvellous facility. Then again, the Puritans form a kind of republic, they all know each other; the servants whom they recommend to one another form a distinct race, which is carefully preserved by them; just as lovers of horse-flesh only admit to their stable, horses whose pedigrees are beyond dispute. The more those who are termed irreligious examine the house of a Puritan, the more clearly do they perceive that everything which it contains is stamped with a certain indefinable want of grace; there is the same appearance of avarice and mystery that stamps the house of the

usurer, the same incense-perfumed dampness that chills the air of the chapel. This sordid regularity, this poverty of ideas everywhere portrayed, can be expressed by one word only—*bigotry*. In these sinister and unbending households bigotry is imprinted upon the furniture, the engravings, the pictures; the talk is bigoted, the silence is bigoted, the faces are bigoted. The transformation of men and things through bigotry is an inexplicable mystery, but the fact is there. Every one may have noticed that bigots do not walk, do not sit down, do not talk as men of the world walk, sit down, and talk. In the house of the bigot there is constraint; people do not laugh; there is stiffness and formality in everything, from the cap of the mistress of the house, to her pincushion; there are no frank looks; people move about like ghosts; the lady of the house seems to be seated on a throne of ice.

One morning poor Granville remarked with sadness and with sorrow, all the symptoms of bigotry in his house. There are in the world certain circles where the same effects exist, though they are not produced by the same causes. Boredom traces around their miserable haunts, a wall of brass, which includes all the horrors of the desert, and the infinity of emptiness. Under such conditions a household is not a tomb; it is worse, it is a convent. Placed in the centre of this glacial sphere, the magistrate considered his wife dispassionately; he observed, with acute pain, the narrow ideas betrayed by the manner in which the hair was planted on the low and somewhat sunken brow; he noticed in the too perfect regularity of the features an immobility and stiffness which soon rendered the affected gentleness by which he had been seduced, quite odious to

him. He felt that some day, on the arrival of some misfortune, those thin lips might say to him, "It is for your good, my friend." The face of Madame Granville assumed a pallid hue and serious expression fatal to the cheerfulness of those who came near her. Was it to the ascetic habits of a puritanism which is no more piety than avarice is economy, that this change was due? Was it the result of the sterility natural to the bigoted mind? It would be difficult to determine. Beauty without expression is perhaps an imposture.

The imperturbable smile which the young woman wore upon her countenance when she looked at Granville seemed with her to be a Jesuitical formula of happiness, whereby she believed that she satisfied all the exigences of marriage; her charity inflicted wounds, her passionless beauty seemed a monstrosity to those who knew her, and the

gentlest of her words caused irritation! She obeyed not feeling, but duty. There are some female defects which may yield to the stern lessons of experience, or to the teaching of a husband; but nothing can overcome the tyranny of false ideas of religion. An eternity of happiness to be won, weighed in the balance against a worldly pleasure, triumphs over everything, and makes everything endurable. Is not this the very apotheosis of egotism, the ego beyond the tomb? The pope, accordingly, was condemned at the tribunal of the infallible canon and the young Puritan. Not to be in the wrong is one of those feelings which supplant all other feelings in these despotic minds. For a long time past there had been a secret conflict between the ideas of the husband and those of the wife, and the young magistrate soon grew weary of a strife which was destined to have no end.

Where is the man, where is the despotism, which can overcome a face of affectionate hypocrisy and categorical remonstrances opposed to the slightest wishes? How can one deal with a woman who makes use of one's passion as a shield for her own insensibility, who seems resolved to remain mildly inexorable, joyfully prepares herself to play the part of a victim, and looks upon her husband as an instrument in the hands of God, as a scourge whereby to escape the scourges of purgatory? What colours can one employ to give an idea of those women who, by carrying beyond all bounds the sweetest precepts of that religion which St. John summed up in the words "Love one another," make virtue itself detestable?

Was there in some milliner's shop a particular hat doomed to hang on hand or to be despatched to the Isles, Granville was sure to see his wife adorned with it. Was there

manufactured some material of peculiarly untasteful design, she muffled herself up in it. These poor Puritans are terrible in their style of dress. Want of taste is a defect inseparable from mistaken piety.

Thus, then, in that intimate home-life to which the most perfect freedom is essential, Granville found himself alone; he went into society alone, he went to balls and theatres alone. In his own home, there was nothing sympathetic about him. A large crucifix, placed between his wife's bed and his own, stood there as a symbol of his destiny; for does it not represent a divinity put to death, a man-God killed, in all the beauty of life and youth. The ivory of that cross was not so cold as Angélique, crucifying her husband in the name of virtue. It was between those two beds that unhappiness was born. This young wife could see nothing but duty in

the pleasures of marriage. There, between these two beds, on a certain Ash Wednesday, arose the keeping of the fast—a pale and livid spectre, who, in curt tones, ordained a complete Lent; nor did Granville on this occasion deem it fitting to write to the Pope, to obtain the opinion of the Consistory as to the mode of observing Lent, Ember Week, and the vigils of the Festivals. The unhappiness of the young magistrate was complete; he could not even complain; he had a pretty, virtuous young wife, devoted to her duties, in fact, the model of every virtue. Every year she presented him with a child, which she herself suckled, and educated in the best principles. The charitable Angélique was promoted to the rank of angel. The old women, who composed the society in the midst of which she lived (for at that epoch young women had not yet taken it

into their heads to launch out into extreme Puritanism, as a matter of fashion), all admired the devotion of Madame de Granville, and regarded her, if not as a virgin, at least as a martyr. They blamed, not the scruples of the wife, but the procreative barbarity of the husband. Granville, meanwhile, overwhelmed with work, cut off from pleasure, and weary of the haunts of society, in which he wandered solitary, fell imperceptibly, as he approached thirty-two, into the most frightful atrophy. Life was hateful to him. Having too keen a sense of the obligations imposed upon him by his station, to set the example of an irregular life, he tried to relieve his mind by labour, and therefore engaged in a great work upon the law. But he did not long enjoy that monastic tranquillity on which he reckoned. When the celestial Angélique saw that he forsook the gaieties

of the world, and took with a kind of regularity to working at home, she essayed to make a convert of him. She was really grieved to know that her husband's principles were barely Christian; she sometimes wept, when she reflected that, if her husband should die, he would perish in final impenitence, and that she could not hope to snatch him from the everlasting flames of hell. Granville, therefore, became the target of those petty notions, those empty arguments and narrow thoughts whereby his wife, who fancied she had gained one victory over him, endeavoured to obtain another, by bringing him within the pale of the Church. That was the final blow. What could be more distressing than those silent contests, in which the obstinacy of the Puritan tried to subdue the dialectics of the magistrate? What more fearful to describe, than those

acrimonious cavils which, to impassioned minds, are worse than the point of the dagger?

Granville deserted the house, in which everything had become insupportable to him; his children, bowed down beneath their mother's frigid tyranny, did not venture to go with their father to the play, nor could Granville procure them any diversion, without drawing down upon them the chastisement of their terrible mother. This man, so full of affection, was forced into an indifference, into an egotism, worse than death. He, however, saved his sons from the infernal regions of home, by sending them to school while quite young, and keeping the reins of management in his own hands. He rarely interfered between the mother and her daughters, but he resolved to procure husbands for them, so soon as they should

attain a marriageable age. Had he tried to assume the high hand, there was nothing to justify him; his wife, supported by a formidable phalanx of dowagers, would have secured his condemnation by the whole earth. Granville's only resource, then, was to live in complete isolation, but, bowed as he was beneath the tyranny of misfortune, he was disgusted with his own features, withered by misery, and worn by toil. And to crown all, his relations and intercourse with women of the world taught him that it was vain to expect consolation from them. Of such consolation, moreover, he was afraid.

The didactic history of this melancholy household did not, during the fifteen years which had elapsed between 1806 and 1821, present any scene worth reporting. Madame de Granville, from the time when she lost her husband's heart, remained

exactly the same as she had been during the days when she called herself happy. She fasted for nine days at a time, in order to pray to God, and His saints, to enlighten her as to the faults which displeased her husband, and to teach her the means of bringing back the wandering sheep; but the more fervently she prayed, the more persistently did Granville absent himself from home. For about five years past, the advocate-general, who, in consequence of the Restoration, obtained high functions in the magistracy, had taken refuge in the entresol of his hotel, to avoid living with the Countess of Granville. Hence, every morning, a scene took place, which, if we are to believe the scandal of society, occurs in several households, where it is produced by certain incompatibilities of temper, by maladies, moral or physical, or by caprices, which

involve many an union in the misfortunes recorded in this story. At about eight o'clock in the morning, a lady's maid, bearing a strong resemblance to a nun, came to ring at the door of the Comte de Granville's rooms. After being admitted into the *salon*, which formed an anteroom to the magistrate's study, she repeated to the *valet-de-chambre*, always in the same tone of voice, the message of the day before. "Madame wishes to know whether Monsieur le Comte has passed a good night, and whether she will have the pleasure of breakfasting with him."

"Monsieur," replied the valet, after having gone and spoken to his master, "Monsieur presents his compliments to Madame la Comtesse, and begs her to accept his excuses; important business compels him to go to the Palais."

An instant afterwards, the lady's maid

again presented herself, and inquired, on madame's behalf, whether she would have the pleasure of seeing Monsieur le Comte, before his departure.

"He is gone," replied the valet; whereas it would often happen that his cabriolet was still in the court.

This ambassadorial dialogue became a quotidian ceremony. Granville's valet, who was a favourite with his master, and had caused more than one quarrel in the establishment, on account of his impiety, and the laxity of his morals, would sometimes, as a matter of form, go into the study, where his master was not, and then return, to make the customary answer.

The afflicted wife always watched for her husband's return, and stationed herself upon the *perron*, in order that as he passed she might be in the way, and meet him like a *Remorse*. The teasing triviality

which is the essence of monastic tyranny, was at the root of that of Madame de Granville, who, though only thirty-five, looked forty. When, constrained by decorum, Granville addressed his wife, or remained at home to dine, pleased to inflict upon him her presence, her bitter-sweet discourse, and the intolerable boredom of her society of bigots, she would seize the opportunity of putting him in the wrong before her servants, and her charitable friends.

Just about this time, the presidency of one of the Courts Royal was offered to Granville, who was at this time in high favour with the king; but he begged the minister to be allowed to remain in Paris. This refusal of promotion, the motives of which were known only to the Keeper of the Seals, suggested the oddest conjectures to the intimate friends, and to the confessor of the countess. Granville, who had

100,000 francs a year, belonged to one of the best families in Normandy; his nomination to a presidency was a step towards the peerage. Why this lack of ambition? Why had the great law-work been cast aside? Whence this dissipation, which, for nearly six years, had made him a stranger in his own house, to his family, to his labours, to all that ought to have been dear to him? The countess's confessor, who, for the obtaining of the bishopric, counted as much upon the suffrages of the houses in which he reigned, as upon the services he rendered to a religious society, of which he was one of the main supporters, was disappointed at Granville's refusal, and endeavoured to calumniate him by various suppositions. If Monsieur le Comte had so much dislike to the provinces, it might be that he was afraid of the necessity he

would be placed in, of leading a regular life. Forced to set an example of good morals, he would live with the countess, from whom nothing but an illicit passion could divide him. Would a woman so pure as Madame de Granville ever recognize the irregularities of her husband's mode of life? The worthy friends of the countess turned these hypotheses into truths; and unfortunately they were not mere hypotheses. Madame de Granville was thunderstruck. Not knowing anything of the morals of the great world, ignorant of love and its follies, Angélique was so far from thinking that marriage could involve any incidents different from those which had alienated Granville's heart, that she believed him incapable of faults, which, in the eyes of every woman, are crimes. When the count had withdrawn his attentions from her, she imagined that the calm, which he

seemed to enjoy was natural; and now that, after she had given him all the affection which it was in her power to bestow on any man, all the illusions—which up to that moment, she had cherished—were wholly dispelled by the conjectures of her confessor, she undertook her husband's defence, but without being able to get rid of the suspicions which had been so cunningly instilled into her mind. These apprehensions caused such ravages in her weak head, that she fell ill, and was attacked by a slow fever. These events took place during the Lent of 1822; she would not consent to abate her austerities, and so gradually sank into a consumptive condition, which excited grave anxiety for her life. The unconcerned air of Granville killed her. Such care and attention as the magistrate did bestow upon her, resembled that which a nephew constrains

himself to show to a rich old uncle. Although the countess had renounced her system of teasing and remonstration, and endeavoured to greet her husband with gentle words, the bitterness of the Puritan pierced the disguise, and one word would often destroy the work of a whole week. Towards the end of the month of May, the genial breath of spring, and a diet more nutritious than Lenten fare, restored some strength to Madame de Granville. One morning, on her return from mass, she went into her little garden, and sat down upon a stone bench, where the caressing warmth of the sun reminded her of the first days of her married life. She was taking a bird's-eye view of the whole of her life, in order to discover in what respect she had failed in her duties as a wife and a mother, when the Abbé Fontanon appeared before her in a state of agitation difficult to be described.

"Have you met with any misfortune, father?" she inquired, with daughterly anxiety.

"Ah!" replied the Normandy priest, "I would that all the misfortunes with which the hand of God afflicts you, were allotted to me; but, my estimable friend, there are trials to which we must learn to submit."

"Is it possible that greater chastisement can be in store for me than that with which Providence overwhelms me by employing my husband as the instrument of its wrath?"

"Prepare yourself, my daughter, for chastisement even greater than that which we and your pious friends formerly supposed."

"I ought then to thank God," replied the countess, "for deigning to employ you as the messenger of His will; thus placing, as He ever does, the treasures of His mercy beside the scourge of His wrath, as formerly,

in banishing Hagar, He opened up for her a fountain in the wilderness."

"He has proportioned your troubles to the strength of your resignation and the weight of your sins."

"Speak, I am prepared to hear all." With these words the countess raised her eyes to heaven and added, "Speak, Monsieur de Fontanon."

"For the last seven years monsieur has been guilty of the sin of adultery with a concubine by whom he has had two children; and he has squandered on that adulterous household more than 500,000 francs, which should of right belong to his legitimate family."

"I must see it with my own eyes," said the countess.

"Take care how you do that," said the abbé. "You must forgive and wait in prayer, my daughter, until God shall en-

lighten your husband, unless you resort to the remedies which human laws provide."

The long conversation which thereupon ensued between the Abbé Fontanon and his penitent produced a violent change in the countess. Having dismissed him, she appeared before her servants with a face that had almost a colour in it. She ordered the horses to be put into the carriage; countermanded her order, changed her mind twenty times in the course of an hour; but at length, as if she had arrived at some important resolution, she set out at about three o'clock, leaving the household astonished at so sudden a change.

"Is your master coming back to dinner?" she inquired of the *valet-de-chambre*, to whom she never spoke.

"No, madame."

"Did you take him to the *Palais* this morning?"

"Yes, madame."

"Is not to-day Monday?"

"Yes, madame."

"Then there is business at the *Palais* on Monday now?"

"May the devil take you!" cried the valet as he saw his mistress drive off, with orders to the coachman to drive to the Rue Taitbout.

Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille was weeping. Roger close beside her had one of her hands in his. He was silent and gazed first at little Charles, who, not understanding his mother's grief, looked on without speaking, while she wept; then at the cradle in which Eugénie was sleeping, and then at the face of Caroline, whose tears resembled an April shower.

"Well, yes, my angel," said Roger, after

a long silence, "that is the great secret, I am married. But some day, I hope, we shall make one family. My wife has been in a desperate state of health since last March. I do not wish for her death, but if it please God to take her to Him, I believe she will be more happy in Paradise, than in the midst of a world to the pains and pleasures of which she is equally indifferent."

"How I hate that woman! How could she render you unhappy? However, it is to your unhappiness that I owe my felicity."

And her tears suddenly dried.

"Caroline, let us live in hope," said Roger, snatching a kiss. "Don't be frightened at what this abbé may have said to you. Although my wife's confessor is, on account of his influence over the congregation, a formidable man, if he should

seek to disturb our happiness I should know what to do. . . ."

"Why, what would you do?"

"We would go to Italy, I would fly. . . ."

A cry from the neighbouring drawing-room made Roger shudder, and Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille tremble. They rushed into the drawing-room, and there found the countess in a swoon. When Madame de Granville recovered consciousness, she sighed profoundly on finding herself between the count and her rival, whom she repulsed with an involuntary gesture full of contempt.

Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille rose to leave the room.

"You are in your own house, madame; I beg you to remain," said Granville, taking hold of Caroline's arm.

The magistrate raised his dying wife, carried her to the carriage, and took a seat by her side.

"Who has induced you to wish for my death—to desert me?" asked the countess in a feeble voice, while she looked at her husband with as much anger as pain. "Was I not young? You thought me beautiful. What have you to reproach me with? Have I deceived you? Have I not been a virtuous and prudent wife? My heart has treasured no image but yours, I have listened to no other voice than yours. In what duty have I fallen short? What have I refused you?"

"*Happiness*," said the count firmly. You know, madame, that there are two ways of serving God. Certain Christians imagine that by going into a church at fixed hours to say Paternosters, hearing mass there regularly, and refraining from

all sin, they will gain heaven. Such persons, madame, go to hell. They have not loved God for His own sake, they have not worshipped Him as He would be worshipped, they have made no sacrifice for Him; although in outward seeming gentle, they are harsh to their neighbour; they see the rule, the letter, but not the spirit. *That* is how you have acted towards your earthly spouse, you have sacrificed my happiness to your salvation; when I approached you with my heart full of joy, I found you on your knees; when you should have lightened my labours, you were weeping; you have entirely failed to minister to my pleasures."

"And if they were criminal," cried the countess passionately, "was I bound to lose my soul in order to please you?"

"That would have been a sacrifice which another more loving than you has had the

courage to make for me," said Granville coldly.

"O my God," cried Madame de Granville, weeping. "Thou hearest him. Was he worthy of the prayers I uttered, and the austerities I underwent in order to redeem his faults as well as my own? What is the use of virtue?"

"To gain heaven, my dear. One cannot be at the same time the wife of a man and of Jesus Christ; that would be bigamy. Women must choose between a husband and a convent. You, with an eye to the future, have divested your heart of all love, of all the devotion which God ordained that you should have for me; and for the world you have no feeling but hatred."

"Have I not loved you, then?"

"No, madame."

"What, then, is love?" asked the countess involuntarily.

"Love, my dear?" replied Granville, with a kind of ironical surprise. "You are not in a condition to understand it. The cold sky of Normandy cannot be that of Spain. Doubtless the question of climates is the secret of our unhappiness. To yield to the caprices of a lover, to divine them, to find pleasure even in pain, to sacrifice for his sake the opinion of the world, self-esteem, even religion itself, and to regard these offerings as mere grains of incense, burned in honour of the idol—that is love."

"Yes, the love of opera girls," said the countess, horrified. "Such fiery passion cannot last, and must soon leave us nothing but coals and ashes, sorrow or despair. A wife, sir, ought, in my opinion, to offer you a true affection, an even warmth of feeling—"

"You talk of warmth, as negroes talk of ice," said the count, with a sardonic

smile. "Consider, the most humble Easter daisy is more seductive than the proudest and most brilliant of the roses which in the spring-time attract us with their penetrating perfumes and vivid colours. Moreover," added he, "I do you justice; you have kept so strictly within the line of duty laid down by the law, that in order to show you in what respect you have failed in relation to me, it would be necessary for me to enter into details which would offend your dignity, and to teach you certain things which would seem to you to be the subversion of all morality."

"You dare to talk of morality, when you have just left a house in which you have squandered the fortune of your children—in a place of debauchery!"

"Madame, there I stop you," said the count coolly, interrupting his wife. "If

Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille is rich, she is not rich at any one's expense. My uncle was the master of his fortune, he had several heirs, but in his lifetime, and out of pure friendship for her whom he regarded as his niece, he gave her the estate of Bellefeuille. As for the rest, I owe it to his liberality."

"That conduct is worthy of such a Jacobin," said the countess.

"Madame, you forget that your father was one of those Jacobins whom you, as a wife, condemn with so little charity," said the count severely. "Citizen Bontems was signing death-warrants, while my uncle was rendering only services to France."

Madame de Granville was silent, but as the recollection of what she had just seen aroused that jealousy which nothing can extinguish in the heart of a woman, she said in a low voice, as if speaking to

herself, "Is it possible thus to destroy one's own soul, and that of others?"

"Ah, madame," resumed the count, fatigued with this conversation, "perhaps it is you who will some day have to answer for all this." (At this phrase the countess trembled.) "In the eyes of the indulgent Judge who will weigh our offences, you will doubtless be excused on account of the good faith with which you have wrought my misery. I do not hate *you;* I do hate the persons who have perverted your head and your heart. You have prayed for me, just as Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille has given me her heart, and poured out on me the treasures of her love. You should have been in turn, my mistress and a saint praying at the foot of the altar. Do me the justice to admit that I am neither wicked nor depraved. My morals are pure. Alas, at the end of seven

years of suffering, the want of happiness has led me by imperceptible degrees to love another woman than you, and to create another family than mine. Don't suppose, however, that I stand alone; there are in this city thousands of husbands who have all been led by divers causes to this double life."

"Great God," cried the countess, "how heavy is my cross become. If the husband whom, in Thine anger, Thou hast imposed upon me, cannot find happiness here below save by my death, recall me to Thy bosom."

"Had you always been actuated by such admirable sentiments, and such self-sacrifice, we should still have been happy," said the count coldly.

"Ah, well," said Angélique, bursting into a flood of tears, "forgive me, if I have committed faults. Yes, sir, I am ready to

obey you in all things, feeling sure that you will ask only what is just and natural. I will be henceforth all that you would wish a wife to be."

"Madame, if your object be to lead me to say that I no longer love you, I shall have the ruthless courage to enlighten you. Can I command my heart? Can I in one instant efface the memory of fifteen years of misery? *I have ceased to love.* Those words enshroud a mystery as deep as that contained in the words *I love.* Esteem, consideration, regard, may be won, may be lost, and be regained; but as for love, if I lectured myself for a thousand years, I could not cause it to grow again, especially for a woman who has tried to make herself old."

"Ah, Monsieur le Comte, I most sincerely hope that those words may not some day be uttered to you in that tone,

and with that accent, by her whom you love."

"Will you put on a dress *à la Grecque*, and come to the opera with me this evening?"

The shudder which this question at once caused the countess was an unspoken reply.

In the early part of the month of December, 1833, a man whose snow-white hair and the general appearance of whose face seemed to show that grief rather than years had aged him, was passing at midnight through the Rue de Gaillon. When he had got as far as a mean-looking house two storeys high, he stopped to look at one of the attic windows which at regular intervals pierced the middle of the roof. This humble window, some of whose panes had been replaced by paper,

was very dimly illuminated. The passenger was looking at the flickering light with the indefinable curiosity of the Parisian idler, when a young man suddenly came out of the house. As the pale rays of the street-lamp fell upon the face of the inquisitive loiterer, it will not seem surprising that, though it was in the night-time, the young man advanced towards the passenger with the hesitation which a Parisian displays when he fears he may be mistaken in supposing that he is meeting an acquaintance.

"What," cried he, "you, Monsieur le President, alone and on foot at this hour, and so far from the Rue St. Lazare? Allow me to have the honour of offering you my arm. The pavement this morning is so slippery, that if we do not support one another" (this he said in order not to wound the old man's self-esteem) "it will be very difficult to avoid a fall."

"But, my dear sir, unhappily for me, I am as yet only fifty-five years of age," replied the Comte de Granville. "A doctor so celebrated as you are, ought to know that at that time of life a man retains all his strength?"

"Then you must have a little love affair on hand; you are not, I fancy, in the habit of going about Paris on foot. When a man has such splendid horses as yours . . . ."

"Why, unless I go out in the evening," interrupted the Comte de Granville, "I generally return from the Palais Royal or from the Strangers' Club on foot."

"Having large sums of money about you, no doubt," said the doctor. "Isn't that inviting the assassin's dagger?"

"I am not afraid of *them*," said the Comte de Granville with careless sadness.

"But at all events it is wrong to stand

still," resumed the doctor, dragging the magistrate towards the boulevard. "I shall soon begin to think that you want to rob me of your last illness, and to die by another hand than mine."

"Ah, you have caught me playing the spy," replied the count. "Whether I pass on foot or in a carriage, and whatever the hour of the night may be, I have for some time past seen the shadow of a person,—who seems to be working with heroic courage—cast upon the window of the third storey of the house which you have just left." Here the count frowned as if he had felt a sudden pang. "I have begun to take as much interest in that attic, as a citizen of Paris can possibly feel in the completion of the Palais Royal."

"Well," cried Horace quickly, interrupting the count, "I can tell you. . . . ."

"Tell me nothing," replied Granville,

cutting the doctor short, "I would not give a single centime to learn whether the shadow that trembles on those tattered curtains, be that of a man or that of a woman, and whether the occupant of the garret be happy or miserable. If it surprised me to see no one working there to-night, and if I stopped, it was simply for the pleasure of forming conjectures as numerous and silly as idlers form at sight of a building suddenly abandoned. For the last nine years my young—" Here the count hesitated to employ some expression; then with a gesture continued—"No, I will not call you my friend, I hate everything which resembles a sentiment. In the last nine years, then, I have ceased to wonder at the pleasure which old men find in cultivating flowers and planting trees. The events of life have taught me no longer to put any faith in human affections, and I grew

old in a few days. I want to sever myself from everything, save unreasoning animals, plants, and the mere externals of life. I attach more importance to the movements of Taglioni than to all human sentiments put together. I hate life; I hate the world in which I find myself alone. Nothing, nothing," added the count with an expression which made the young man shudder, "no, *nothing* moves, *nothing* interests me."

"But you have children?"

"My children!" he resumed in a peculiarly bitter tone. "Well, as to my children, there is the eldest of my daughters, is she not Comtesse de Vaudenesse? As for the second, her sister's marriage will be the means of securing her a good match. As for my two sons, have they not met with very great success? The vicomte, after being attorney-general at Limoges, has been made first president at Orleans, and my

younger son is here as the king's attorney. My children have cares, anxieties, and business of their own. If one among them had entirely devoted herself or himself to me, and tried to fill with affection the void which I feel *there*," said he striking his bosom; "well, that child's life would have been a failure, would have been sacrificed to me. And after all, to what purpose? To embellish my few remaining years. Would he have succeeded? Should I not perhaps have looked upon his generous attentions as a debt? But, doctor" (here the old man began to smile with profound irony), "doctor, it is not for nothing that we teach our children arithmetic; they know how to calculate. Perhaps at this very moment my children are on the look out for my fortune."

"Oh, Monsieur le Comte, how could such an idea occur to you who are so good, so

obliging and so humane? Truly if I were not myself a living proof of that benevolence which you conceive in all its breadth and beauty. . . . ."

"For my pleasure," quickly interposed the count. "I pray for a sensation as I would to-morrow give a heap of gold for the most puerile illusion which would stir my heart. I help my fellow creatures, just as I gamble—for my own sake. Thus, I do not count upon the gratitude of any one. I could without a sign of grief see you yourself die, and I require you to feel towards me as I feel towards you. Ah, young man, the events of life have passed over my heart as the lava of Vesuvius over Herculaneum; the city exists, but it is dead."

"Those who have reduced to such a state of insensibility, a heart so warm and susceptible as yours was, are highly culpable."

"Don't add another word," said the count with a feeling of horror.

"You have a disease which you should allow me to cure," said Bianchon, in a voice of deep emotion.

"Do you know any remedy for death?" cried the count impatiently.

"Well, Monsieur le Comte, I undertake to reanimate the heart which you think so dead."

"Are you equal to Talma?" asked the chief president ironically.

"No, Monsieur le Comte, but nature is as superior to Talma as Talma is to me. Listen; the denizen of the garret in which you take an interest is a woman of thirty; with her, love reaches fanaticism. The object of her worship is a young man with a handsome face, but endowed by some wicked fairy with every possible vice. The youth is a gambler, and I do not know

which he likes best, women or wine; he has been guilty, to my certain knowledge, of actions which ought to bring him under the notice of the correctional police. Well, this unfortunate woman has sacrificed for his sake a very prosperous existence, a man who adored her and by whom she has children. But what is the matter, Monsieur le Comte?"

"Nothing—go on."

"She has allowed him to squander a complete fortune, she would give him the world, I believe, if she had it; she works day and night, and she has often without one murmur seen the monster she adores rob her of the money which was intended to pay for the clothes which her children lacked, and even the morrow's food. Three days ago she sold her hair—the most beautiful hair I ever saw; he came in before she had time to hide the piece

of gold; he asked her for it, and—for a smile—for a kiss—she surrendered what would have secured them food and tranquillity for a fortnight. Is it not at once horrible and sublime? But work is beginning to hollow her cheeks. The cries of her children have rent her heart; she has fallen ill, she now lies moaning on a truckle bed. This evening she had nothing to eat, and her children were too weak to cry; they were quiet when I went in."

Horace Bianchon stopped. The Comte de Granville had, as if in spite of himself, plunged his hand into his waistcoat-pocket.

"I understand, my young friend, how she manages still to exist, if she is under your care."

"Ah, poor creature!" cried the doctor, "*who* would not render her aid? I

wish I were richer, for I hope to cure her of her love."

The count, who, unobserved by the doctor, had put his hand into his pocket, now withdrew it full of notes which he appeared to have been searching for there.

"But," replied he, "how can you expect me to sympathize with suffering, the pleasures of which would seem to me to be cheaply purchased with my whole fortune. This woman feels; she lives. Would not Louis Quinze have given his whole realm to have risen from his coffin, and have three years of youth and life? Is not that the history of millions of dead folks, of millions of invalids, of millions of old men?"

"Poor Caroline!" cried the doctor.

When he heard that name, the Comte de Granville trembled, and seized the arm of the doctor, who felt as if he were in the grasp of the iron lips of a vice.

"Is her name Caroline Crochard?" asked the president in a voice that betokened deep emotion.

"You know her, then?" asked the doctor in astonishment.

"And the wretch's name is Solvet. Ah, you have kept your word," cried the first president; "you have excited in my heart the most terrible sensation which it will experience till it turns to dust. This emotion is yet another gift of hell, and I always know how to pay such debts."

At this moment the count and the doctor had reached the corner of the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin. One of those children of the night who go about with a wicker basket on their backs, and a hook in their hands, and were therefore during the revolutionary epoch wittily called, "members of the committee of researches," was standing near the post be-

fore which the president had just stopped. The rag-gatherer had an old face worthy of those which Charlet has immortalized in his caricatures of the scavenger school.

"Do you often find thousand franc notes?" inquired the count.

"Sometimes, master."

"And do you give them up?"

"That depends upon the reward that is offered."

"There, my man," said the count, presenting the rag-gatherer with a thousand franc note. "Take that," said he, "but bear in mind that I give it you on condition that you spend it in the public-house, that you get drunk there, fight, beat your wife, and knock your friends' eyes out. That will make work for the watchmen, the surgeons, the apothecaries, perhaps for the gendarmes, the king's attorneys, the judges, and the jailers.

Stick to that programme, or the devil will sooner or later have it out with you."

To do justice to this nocturnal scene a man would need the pencils of Charlet and Callot, and the brushes of Teniers and Rembrandt.

"Now my account with hell is settled, and I have had some pleasure for my money," said the count, in a deep voice, as he pointed out to the astounded doctor the indescribable face of the gaping rag-gatherer.

"As for Caroline Crochard, she may die in all the horrors of hunger and thirst, with the heartrending cries of her children in her ears, and in her heart the full conviction of the baseness of the man she loves. I would not give one farthing to hinder her from suffering, and for the single reason that you have given her help, I hope that I may never see you more—"

Leaving Bianchon more motionless than a statue, the count disappeared in the direction of the Rue St. Lazare, with all the speed of youth. He very soon reached the door of the little hotel which he occupied. Somewhat to his surprise, a carriage was waiting at the door.

"Monsieur le Procureur du roi came here an hour since to speak to you, sir, and is waiting in your bed-room," said the valet to his master.

Granville motioned his servant away.

"What important motive compels you to infringe the order I gave my children not to come to my house unless I send for them?" said the old man, as he entered the room where his son was.

"Father," replied the young man, in a trembling voice, and with a respectful air, "I venture to hope that you will forgive me when you have heard me."

"That is a very proper answer," said the count. "Sit down. But whether I walk about or remain seated, take no notice of me."

"Father," resumed the baron, "this afternoon at four o'clock, a young man who was arrested in the house of one of my friends, from whom he has stolen a considerable sum, referred us to you. He says he is your son."

"What is his name?" said the count, trembling.

"Charles Crochard."

"Enough," said the father, with a gesture of command.

Thereupon Granville began to pace up and down the room amid profound silence, which his son was careful not to interrupt.

"My son" (these words were uttered in a voice so gentle and so paternal, that the young man trembled with emotion),

"Charles Crochard has told you the truth. I am glad you came this evening, my good Eugène," added the old man. "Here is a considerable sum of money," said he, producing a pile of bank-notes; "you will employ it in this matter as you think best. I trust to you and approve beforehand of all your arrangements, whether for the present or the future. Eugène, my dear boy, come and embrace me; this is perhaps the last time we shall see each other. To-morrow I shall ask the king for leave of absence, and shall start for Italy. If a father is not bound to account to his children for his life, he is bound to bequeath them the experience fate has sold him; is it not a part of their inheritance? When you marry," resumed the count, with an involuntary shudder, "do not lightly enter into that solemn engagement, the most important of all those

which society forces upon us. Remember to study for a long time the disposition of the woman with whom you are about to associate yourself; but consult me; I should like to form my own opinion about her. The want of union between husband and wife, no matter whence it springs, brings dreadful misery in its train; we are, sooner or later, punished for not obeying the laws of society. I will write to you from Florence upon this subject. A father, especially if he has the honour of being president of a supreme court, ought not to have to blush before his son. Good-bye."

THE END.

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